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Minstrel-Love;

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

THE AUTHOR OF UNDINE.

BY GEORGE SOANE, A.B.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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1821.

E.S.

Still, when ye murmur, gentle rains,
And give me for my minstrel-strains
Full many a pearl that glitters bright,
Oh! all within is warm with light.

" The sin-flood now has past away,
Its fear wounds not our brighter day;
Though light forebodings still may rest
At times upon the earth's dark breast,
Yet, soon the passing terror flies,
When Heaven's arc bends o'er the skies,
And, wound about the azure dome,
Smiles sweetly from its air-built home.

" Thou blessing born of cloudy hours,
Thou sweetest fall of tearful showers,
Still shalt thou move my minstrel-soul
Whene'er thy gentle murmurs roll,
That it may flow as mild and clear,
And often by the spirit's tear
To soft and pleasing pain be given,
In echoings true of yonder heaven."

At this moment the rainbow stood clearly and in all its colours over the fields of Granada; Arnald greeted the token of promise with cheerful gratitude.

In landing, he perceived a Moorish knight, who rode slowly up and down in the rain upon a beautiful mule, and

seemed, like the Troubadour, to enjoy the gentle coolness and the play of light upon the falling pearls.

He now came nearer to the shore; Arnald recognized the polished emblems upon the mail garment, and could no longer doubt its being Gryba who now met him on the borders of the sea. The young Moorish hero looked highly interesting as he rode on stilly and courteously, and seemed as if overshadowed by the rainbow; upon his face smiled an indescribable mildness—a careless serenity, which might also have been called childish—although a melancholy cloud lay upon his brow, while his dark eyes sparkled brightly, and told, how in the battle and the combat the young knight could flame forth terribly, and yet always clearly, and nobly, and beautifully.

Arnald looked upon him with inward satisfaction. His whole soul was light within him, and he thought to himself:

" That is a youth to whom one might delight to sing the best and loftiest strains. He may perhaps, indeed, understand only Arabic, and know as much as nothing of me. What then does it signify? I yet know him, and he yet belongs, like a true friendly child of Heaven, to the rainbow that passes over him. It is a beautiful gift of Heaven that the most unknown images, provided they are of the pure kind, glitter so kindly in the minstrel's eye, sooner or later to be reflected in his songs, sometimes consciously, and sometimes without his knowledge, and always to the delight of many a kindred spirit in the wide and blooming world."

Gryba now halted close before him, and, with his usual frankness, asked if he could assist him in the landing.

" You are hospitable as your kindred beneath the palms of Arabia," said Arnald, smiling,—"and will not ask me after

my name and country without first showing me a kindness. But here it concerns both name and country. How is it, dear Sir—am I to live upon this coast in war or peace? I am the Christian knight, Sir Arnald of Maraviglia, a Provençal Troubadour."

Upon this the friendly Gryba leaped from his saddle, embraced the new guest with heartfelt warmth, and said in pure Provençal:—"Welcome to us all, a thousand times, thou dearest minstrel! Know you not, that our women ever read and sing your tales and poems, and take pleasure too in their hearing? Know you not, that our warriors light their courage from your songs and the noble deeds of battle that are told of you? How then could you ever be received as an enemy on these coasts?—But that you may know it with more certainty, come with me to the slender tower on yon eminence."

Nor did he rest until he had forced Arnald into the saddle of the mule, while he himself, walking by the side, guided it with the silver studded, green silk bridle; at the same time he gave the Minstrel's baggage to the particular care of several slaves who were then approaching.

CHAPTER II.

THE nearer they approached, the more polished and beautiful arose the little tower in air, illumined by the solitary sun-beams. At the moment that they reached it and stood upon the back of the hill, the rain-clouds sundered, and sailed from each other, partly over the sea, partly over the distant mountains, so that the plain, richly built upon, and glittering with innumerable villas, towers, and dwellings, opened itself on all sides to a wide, delicious prospect. Arnald's breast swelled with ecstacy, and his piercing eye could not yet embrace the whole variety and loveliness of the scene.

"Above, upon the tower, it is still more beautiful; only come up, dear Minstrel," said Gryba smiling, and took him coaxingly by the arm.

Arnald followed, and the more readily, because the gentle steps which they ascended, ran on the outside of the building, veiling the lovely country here and there, only to show it again with renewed splendour, on some other point of observation.

"Ah, here," said Arnald, "must one dwell who is a mighty master of colours and the pencil."—

"Such an one does, indeed, live here," said Gryba,—and, close upon the highest point of the tower, he opened a little door, richly adorned with trellice-work and many strange images of simple brass. They then entered into a cheerful chamber, illumined on all sides by wide and lofty windows, some of which were carefully veiled with the most costly tapestry.

The implements of painting were scattered around, and many brilliant pictures shone here and there upon the pillars. In calm repose sate the artist,

upon a low convenient stool, his back towards the intruders, and diligently painted images upon the clear leaves of a vellum volume, alternately dipping into the colour cups to the right and left of him.

Gryba motioned to his companion to be silent, and led him gently to the place of operation. The artist had not remarked their entrance, and sate, as before, most earnestly intent upon his work. Gryba pointed to it, and Arnald read in the middle of the splendid page, these words, inscribed in gold and azure:

"Oh, Lady, said the knight,
Love dwells in bowers of light;
There are golden gates without it,
And faithful guards about it,
With the shaft upon the string,
Who ope those realms of spring
But to those who serve with glory
The dames of honour's story."

Arnald perceived that one of his most beautiful heroic legends was blazoned in this book; great was his delight

in seeing how the artist had decorated the broad margin with branches and cloudy images, of the most verdant green and the most brilliant red, on a ground of purest azure—never had he seen ought more blooming in his dreams — they all had a reference to the verse in the middle of the leaf. The inlaid lights, nearly all of beaming gold, mysteriously shone through them. In the same beautiful and intellectual way, the next open page was decorated. Yet it seemed strange to the Troubadour, that all these forms of men and beasts grew, as it were, out of the cups of flowers or the wreath of clouds, and so far seemed to have less resemblance to human life than to plants and airy images.

As Arnald with increasing delight bent more closely towards the work, the lyre, which depended from his shoulder, rustled against the handle of Gryba's sabre, and a sweet accord echoed clearly

through the chamber. The artist looked round in wonder.

It was Balta.—How could Arnald mistake, even for a moment, that mild firmness, that earnest smile,—above all, that holy glow of art and heroism which was visible in his dark and sparkling eyes?

The two youths were above measure rejoiced to have with them so dear a master; from Balta's lips, that were else so silent, flowed a stream of the richest wit, and the most childish playfulness, such as Arnald never could have looked for in so grave a spirit. But no sooner did the Minstrel again turn longingly to the paintings, than Balta was serious, and turned over with earnest delight leaf after leaf of the manuscript, that was now almost completed, and ever and anon looked up inquiringly at his guest with a friendly smile. Dazzled by the richness of the colours as by the imagination, Arnald was even more

astonished at the perfect understanding of his songs. The poem seemed in its very words sounds and feelings to have visibly entered into form and body by the magic of the pencil. With a loud cry of joy the Minstrel clasped the artist in his arms.

"'Tis most delightful thus," said the friendly Gryba, clapping his hands together; "But I knew it well; it could not be much otherwise."

When they had run through the manuscript, the conversation took a more various and excursive turn. Balta drew up all the window blinds, so that the eye, as if from a magic lamp, could look around over the whole extent of country. Then at his call several servants entered with costly refreshments, and the two young Moorish heroes did as Prince Tarfe had done before. They drank joyfully to their noble guest in the sparkling wine from the polished cups of glass.

"Do not hold us, therefore, for bad Mussulmen," said Balta earnestly. "Many may from lightness overstep this law of our prophet; we should observe it strictly in our Eastern land, but here, beneath this foreign climate, the professors of our law expound it otherwise."

Arnald bowed with respect to the truth which spoke from Balta's lips, but Gryba merrily interrupted:—"A foreign climate! In this you concede too much to the Christians, for they also fancy that we do not belong to this country. In a manner they are right—in a manner, wrong *too*—but so much the more occasion is there for fighting; and that, after all,—however beautifully may bloom the women, however gloriously may smile the spring, and the minstrels pour forth their verse—that, after all, is and remains the most splendid and delightful thing in life."

"You again," replied Balta, remain-

ing earnest,—" You again are speaking after your singular fashion, according to which, he, who did not know you better, would take you for a wild adventurer who thought himself called upon to rush over the earth with savage joy but for the sake of fighting. Ah, Gryba! and you are yet so good! so gentle!"

" But you know it," said the friendly youth, smiling, " and the master too assuredly believes no evil of me. Is it not true, dear Minstrel?"

Arnald pressed his hand with sincere affection, and the words again flowed in their animated course, joyfully and carelessly and from the heart itself.

When the conversation returned to the beautiful manuscript, Balta said, amongst other things: " If you only knew, master, for whom I am painting these splendid characters, and these intricate images! —It is for the beautiful Queen Soleyma! She is particularly fond of your rhymes and legends, and it is my pride that she

has commissioned me, and no one else, to character for her this work of highest estimation."

Arnald looked down thoughtfully, and said, after a pause: "It is now high time that you, friendly youths, should learn the purpose of my coming to this land. The ornament, with the constellation, that you won from a messenger in Provence—Have you it still? or is it already with the Queen Soleyma?"

Gryba and Balta looked at each other in astonishment. At length both exclaimed, as if with one mouth,—"This imports a combat between us for the jewel—Is it not so, noble Knight?"

"It will, indeed, come to that," replied Arnald,—"For I demand it back for the exalted Countess Alearda, and have promised myself, either to lie dead upon this strand, or to bear it home with me to Castle Bisiers."

"And you take it up so seriously!"

sighed Balta, while a cloud of tearful melancholy passed across his eyes. But Gryba had missed the death-threat in Arnald's speech, and said, well satisfied: "Excellent, that one at least of us will have the honour of fighting with you, my noble Knight and master. As to what concerns the ornament, the matter stands thus: when we embarked with Tarfe on the Provençal expedition, the beautiful Queen Soleyma promised kiss and greeting to the knight, who should bring home with him a jewel which he could affirm upon his word of honour had been worn by the Countess Alearda, and held by her in estimation. You, dear Knight, will soon see the splendid Soleyma with your own eyes, and then will not wonder that myself and Balta set our lives upon gaining this heavenly mead before all other warriors; for the rest, you seem to know our adventure with the messenger."

Arnald signed assent.

"Now then," continued Gryba, "learn that the affair is not yet settled. The beautiful Soleyma knew beforehand that some knight would come, in the service of the noble Alcarda, to demand the jewel back again; and, as fortune had been unequal and undecided between us in the conquest of it, she will now receive it from his hands only who compels the Provençal knight to abandon his pretensions. Till to day it has been in my keeping, for upon our throwing dice for this privilege, chance decided for myself. A new cast of dice is, according to the lady's will, to settle who first shall fight with you in this business."

"It has thus become an earnest, but a noble matter," answered the Minstrel; "When may I be presented to the Queen Soleyma?"

They agreed to take their noble guest to court in the evening of that very day. Balta prepared himself for the journey to the Queen's Pleasure Castle, while Gryba

led the Minstrel to a beautiful chamber that he had built in the neighbourhood, upon the top of a gigantic chesnut tree. Arnald dressed himself richly and carefully in this strange abode, that he might appear as a worthy messenger before the Moorish Queen.

CHAPTER III.

Two broad and circular flights of stairs,—on which orange-trees were blooming at every season in brazen vases—wound about the hill at the entrance of Soleyma's castle; there the thin gold columns of the building formed a hall with their decorated arches, or rather a royal canopy, surrounded with noble tapestry, and Eastern sophas of the richest materials. The walls between the pillars consisted almost wholly of transparent windows, through which the splendour of the inner rooms glittered as in a fairy vision. As Arnald, with the two young Moorish heroes, entered through a golden trellice-door upon the broad grass-plot at the foot of the bright and blooming hill, there sate the queen above, overcanopied by the splendid hall; she leant in proud and

careless grace upon the embroidered cushions, surrounded by a rich retinue, brilliant with the noblest jewels, but more brilliant in the splendour of their beauty.

Arnald was compelled to cast down his dazzled eyes, as if the mid-day sun had suddenly burst from out a cloud, and felt refreshed when the boughs of the blooming orange-trees concealed him from the royal beauty.

Now, leaving the highest step behind him, he came out of the odorous shades before the hall, and close to him beamed the splendour of the alluring, yet exalted lady. A jewelled diadem was interessed amidst her twisted locks of brown; her large eyes shone out proudly and beautifully, and turned in grace towards the Minstrel, whom she greeted briskly in the purest Provençal with her rosy lips, while her hand, white as snow, beckoned his approach; as the wide Arabic garment fell back, there was visible an

arm, such as the pencil of Balta could never have surpassed. Arnald could not help thinking of the beautiful heathen goddess Juno, of whom he had read much in the antient minstrelsy, and he now almost believed that he saw her actually before him.

But he did not feel, as at the first appearance of Alearda, checked in speech and thought, and insufficient to his own sensations. On the contrary, after the first dazzling, he was cheerful and certain in his mind, his words bloomed fairly and orderly like flowers at the breath of June, and he performed his embassy in the clearest manner, in brief and harmonious language.

Soleyma looked upon him, well-pleased, and said; "The Countess Alearda has chosen for her knight a Minstrel as dexterous as he is celebrated."

"You give me too high a name in calling me the Knight of the Countess Alearda," replied the Troubadour; "I

have neither dared to ask for so honourable an employ, nor could my trifling services move her spontaneously to grant it. I should rather presume to call myself her Minstrel, but even of such a distinction I am perhaps unworthy, and serve her only as the nightingales do service to the spring: it denies them not, it bids them not; but they sing on in its brightness, and beyond that are the same as if not there at all."

"You are of a most modest way of thinking," said Soleyma, smiling almost in scorn; "Good troth, Alearda may grant you this most innocent service up to your last hour without the least hesitation."

"So to God! I hope it!" replied the Minstrel earnestly,—and at these simple words the lofty Soleyma involuntarily bent her eyes towards the earth.

Soon, however, she began again in her former tone of mockery:—"For such a May nightingale, you are very fond of fighting!"

"If in the dark and mystic world of animals the nightingale and the lion are utterly distinct, it is otherwise and better,—God be praised!—in the bright and gifted world of man. I should pity your country, if it had no minstrels in whom the music of the nightingale and the courage of the lion are united. But I know well, it has many such, and it pleases you to sport with my foreign helplessness. For the present, lady, I bow myself in earnest duty before your lovely face, and beg your allowance to combat for life or death with these two noble Knights for the starry ornament which the Countess Alearda desires should be returned."

In earnest beauty Soleyma gazed upon him, while the transient red of anger passed over his cheeks, that at other times were pallid; after some thought, she thus answered:

"I allow the battle. But, my noble Knight of Maraviglia,—

"When war awakes his servant death,
Then rules young May on spangled wing
And bids her nightingales to sing,
And plays o'er all with balmy breath."

"You see that here too we know the beautiful song in which you praised the autumn to Alearda, and now justice shall be done to May according to your own declaration: when its nightingales sing, then, warlike Minstrel, fight you your battle; 'Till then you must tarry with us, and for once grant to the ladies of Granada the honour and the delight of receiving your songs and legends from the first hand. You are too gallant to say no to this; and moreover, I call to mind, that you yourself have elected me the arbitress of the combat."

Arnald could not do otherwise than bow in silent affirmation, though the delay sate heavily upon his heart.—

"I should like to invite you," said Soleyma, "to abide here in my castle, but I know that I should therein offend Gryba,

who has already enticed you into his wonderful aerial bower. Perhaps, however, winter will oblige me, and come upon us somewhat sooner than is his custom in these lands, when, I hope, you will not take refuge in Gryba's mossy tower, but rather in this cheerful castle."

Without waiting for an answer, she arose from the cushions, requested the arm of the stranger knight, and entered with him into the vast saloon that already was shining with its lamps of gold; many women with crowns of flowers, and pages in rich vestments, preceded them with torches; the rest of the household followed.

And now in the light halls began a rich and brilliant festival. Games and dances succeeded each other in the most delightful and unconstrained fashion; the most noble fruits and drinks, not only of that favoured climate, but, as it seemed, of all the blooming countries of the earth, allured the palate in silver plates

and golden goblets. Now sweet and dying melodies, now cheerful dances, and now again the inspiring march, echoed from chosen instruments through the arches of the halls. Arnald could not conceal from himself that he had never before lived in such magic brilliance; and yet, one thought on that solemn chamber, holily illumined by flowers and paintings,—that chamber wherein he for the first spoke with Alearda,—or on that lofty alley in the Viscount's gardens—and he felt as the virgin of the legend, who passed her childhood in the blessed joys of paradise, and for some sin was afterwards banished to the noise and tumult of the earth.

With earnest aspirations he at length, as the feast grew slack, retired with Gryba to their strange tree-dwelling; it was a still and moonlight night, and its sweetness was sprinkled by the gentle showers.

CHAPTER IV.

DURING the dance and the sports, Gryba, in the pure spirit of youth, had been heartily delighted in talking, playing, and singing, with the women, and seemed at his departure to be still more satisfied. On the way he pressed to his lips a pomegranate flower so often and so fervently, that it might be easily guessed the flower was a promising pledge of love.

Suddenly he asked the Minstrel:— "Which is the more beautiful, my noble guest, the Countess Alearda, or the Queen Soleyma?"

"Ask me rather," said Arnald, "which is the more beautiful, the cloudless heaven, or the earth in summer? No comparison, and, still less rivalry, can find a

place there. As to what regards myself, I have accustomed my eye so much to the sight of the clear heavens, that the earth, with all its magic stores, cannot content me."

In the meantime they had reached the chesnut-tree, and, having ascended the stairs, began to undress themselves in the splendid chamber.

With Arnald was a Provençal, a good humoured peasant, whom he had taken into his service; this man fancied that Gryba understood nothing at most but Arabic, and therefore said very freely to his master; "Do you really intend to dwell always with that mocking heathen bird in his nest? In truth, however, the creature does look like a sort of a knight;—yes, yes,—there are very strange appearances in foreign countries."

Gryba hung his sabre against the wall, and by the action concealed his laughter, while Arnald, not to interrupt the

jest, answered his servant with perfect composure, that he certainly should take up his abode there for the present.

"Well, truly," said the Provençal, "other folks, other manners: one must accommodate one's self to every thing, if one thinks to be a reasonable man, or suchlike. Will they believe me when I tell them at home of this bird? Just like a knight, on my soul! Just like a knight,—and nothing of feathers to be seen about him! If he had not made his nest above here, I should not in all my born days have found out that he really was a bird. And he speaks too his gibberish like the best parrot, and the people of the country here regularly understand him, and honour him like a master. Yes, yes; he is curious enough as to that.—But tell me, noble Knight, how does the Queen look?"

"Beautiful as an angel," replied Arnald.

"Wonderful! Very wonderful!" said the peasant; "I had fancied now

that she must be a sort of mermaid, some of whom, it is understood, live on land, and do not use to swim about like irrational fish-creatures. But, turn it as one will, after all, a real proper Queen she can not be!—A Moorish Queen!—That is not by far so much as a Countess with us."

"In this, at least, my good youth, you are in some measure right," said Gryba in Provençal, and clapped him familiarly upon the shoulder.—The poor fellow was as if petrified with horror and astonishment: at last he began to make a profusion of bows, and to protest it was not from an evil will that he had considered the gentleman as a bird, and that he infinitely lamented he was not one, inasmuch as he was now ignorant of his proper title.

"Call me, as before, the mocking heathen bird," said Gryba, laughingly: "I like to hear that name. But, in truth, with regard to Queen Soleyma you are

right. She bears this appellation more on account of her all-conquering beauty and of her renowned forefathers, than that she is invested in these lands with any royal power.—And yet,"—he continued, turning seriously to Arnald,—"and yet, my noble master, if you ever have to defend your lovely Provence and all the blooming kingdom of the Franks against Moorish hosts, that pour in without limit and without number, then think upon the Queen Soleyma. You know how fearful such beautiful mistresses,—even without ruling over lands and people in the customary form,—have become to whole nations, nay, perhaps to whole portions of the globe."

"You reveal to me a sad futurity," answered Arnald; "yet with God's aid and in the service of Alearda, I hope to go through it gloriously and even joyfully."

"Good night, my noble Sir Heathen Bird," said the peasant, humbly bowing to Gryba, and he quitted the apartment.

Arnald stretched himself thoughtfully on the cushions of his bed, while Gryba, laughing, seated himself by the window, took a lute upon his arm, and touching it sweetly, if not even skilfully, sang this song to its music:

"Good night, good night!
In the moon's pale shine,
When every one sleeps,
Then it tinkles so light,
Then it tinkles so fine,
The song to the maid who in loneness weeps.

"In the night! In the night!
When the blue stars shine,
And the listner sleeps,
Then he steals in so light,
And he steals in so fine,
The lover to her, who in loneness weeps."

Arnald saw plainly through the open window, that a white figure, from the

balcony of a near castle, held out a lily far into the night. Gryba looked round to him laughingly, pressed his finger upon his lips, took his sabre from the wall, and, carrying it under his arm, soon vanished out of the window, lightly and noiselessly as a sylph.

CHAPTER V.

On the following mid-day, Arnald and Gryba sate at a friendly meal, beneath the shade of their tree, and upon its gigantic roots, that were crowned with moss; to this they expected with every moment their friend Balta, who had promised to come, but who yet lingered to their expectation.

It chanced that a beautiful peasant-girl passed by, carrying a basket of ripe oranges upon her head, that was covered over with graceful ringlets, Gryba addressed her thus in song:

"Wherefore bear the lovely flowers,
Lovelier blossom, through these bowers?
Art thou, fairest fruit of heaven,
To another's promise given?
Must we languish, beauty's daughter,
As the desert leaves, for water?

Must in wish our life be wasted,
Joy still near, but never tasted?
Go not thus with lovely flowers,
Lovelier blossom, through these bowers.
Or, thou fairest fruit of heaven,
Heart and soul, to me be given!"

The maiden looked at the knight with well-pleased blush:—When suddenly the basket tottered on her head, some of the oranges fell out, disturbing the equilibrium by their fall, so that at last the whole basket tumbled after them, and the golden fruit rolled widely about the field. The maiden clasped her little hands together in alarm, and the tears of anger started into those eyes that, a moment before, had been so clear.

But Gryba with his accustomed quickness had hastened after the flying oranges, and, having soon collected them, packed them up again in the basket with chesnut leaves between; he then placed the whole upon the maiden's head, and,

as she bent for that purpose, let fall a handsome chain of gold upon her lovely shoulders. She greeted him thankfully, and sang as she descended to a near valley:

"Under the leaves of the chesnut bright,
Dwelleth Sir Gryba, the gallant knight,
Maiden's beware of the leafy shade,
Where summer burns o'er the hill and glade;

"For whether the sun is high, or low
Still dwells there the summer's glow,
Under the leaves of the chesnut bright,
Gryba, the handsome, the gallant knight."

"Do they often sing such warning songs of you?" said Arnald smiling.

"Oh Mahomet!" replied Gryba, cordially; "There are too many lovely maids here in this country: otherwise I am not such an enamoured creature."

"And the jest of it is, that he is in some measure right," said Balta, who in the meantime had come upon them unawares. "He is not in reality so

much enamoured as one would imagine: he cannot, indeed, see an agreeable woman, or a handsome maid, without wishing her to cherish his image in her heart; but, if he once is sure of this, he runs on farther very willingly, and without any particular exertion. Yes; they may have, for all he cares, the most admired lovers, and the most despotic husbands, so that they will only recollect him at least once a year, and sigh:—'Ah, the noble, gallant Gryba!'—And it must be confessed that he has pretty well brought it to this in the royal Granada, Murcia, and Andalusia:—nay even, a little in Provence and the Christian kingdoms of our peninsula!"

"He does not always stop there," said Arnald, smiling, with a recollection of the night before.

"In truth," said Balta, "it is for the most part only *that*—at least he does not actually wish for any thing more, and I have often seen him adventure the

most break-neck exploits, merely perhaps to lay a flower on the table of his beloved, in her absence—with the full certainty of never again coming to the sight of his adored one in all his life!"

Gryba sate by, laughing heartily, and heard with great satisfaction his friends thus passing judgment on him.

While they were thus at table, talking and drinking together, there passed by a herd of most beautiful horses, in a light sporting trot, and with all manner of bounds and frolics; these noble animals belonged to the rich Gryba and were coming back from watering. The clear artist-soul of Balta rose again visibly in his eyes as he endeavoured to make these graceful and vigorous forms his own. Gryba, on the contrary, was earnest, and after his fashion almost sorrowful, while the melancholy cloud gathered distinctly on his brow. At last he sighed,—"Oh my lovely Pontifer! my noble milk-white steed! When shall

I again see you amongst my herds? When will you again speed me into the flashing and dusty battle!"

And then turning his eyes on Arnald, he became more gloomy, and said: "In the great joy of your presence I had forgotten it, but now again it rises sadly on my soul.—Must it be with you—precisely with you, my honoured knight of Maraviglia, that I must have such mortal combats? For, not only the star-ornament is at stake; you have also my good war-horse, Pontifer, and I know you too well to think you would give up the noble charger without blood. And alas! I dare not leave him! He descends from Mahomet's own horse, and only Mussulmen know how to use him. He may, indeed be proud, and with justice, of bearing you, but the people yonder who do not know him, nor honour him, nor love him, as he was wont to be, and as belongs to his

birth,—who can not speak to him in his Arabic, who see nothing in him, but a useful beast,—Arnald, my heart could burst!"

He turned away with tearful eyes, and even Arnald felt his cheeks were wet, for no one better understood the touching attachment of noble animals to their masters, and of noble masters to their animals. How willingly would he have had there the faithful Pontifer, to have yielded him again to Gryba. But honour bade him to maintain with his blood that splendid token of victory, which had been given to him by the knightly hand of the Viscount Bisiers.—He bridled his weaker feelings and remained silent.

At length Gryba said,—"As there must be a battle between us, let us at least put the two combats into one, dear knight and master. I think we should decide at once and by the same result,

to whom should belong the star-ornament, and to whom the noble Pontifer."

But an angry glow rose upon Arnald's cheeks, and in his eyes a chastizing fire.—"When I combat for aught that belongs to my exalted mistress,"—he exclaimed,—"no other good of earth must lie in the balance, even though it were an empire. For the rest, Sir Gryba, if it pleases you to fight for your noble horse, I am ever at your service. But first I must have compelled back the star-ornament, and have laid it at the feet of the Countess Alearda, and then I think it would be best that you should sail with me to Provence. If my death is the result, you can take home your Pontifer in victory; if yours,—there is no sweeter grave-hill for the noblest hero of the noblest time, than in meads that have been trodden by the foot of Alearda."

"You know how to serve woman

most worthily," said Gryba, half in whispers. "And ah! What an exalted mistress must she be, who has inspired you to such a service! But are you angry with me for my hasty words?"

"God forbid?" replied Arnald, and touched his lyre, and sang to it the following rhymes:

"Oh, Pontifer! thou stately steed,
With speaking eyes, of holy breed,
Why dost thou gaze so wild, yet still,
Now right, now left, in doubtful will?
Two noble knights contend for thee,
Say which shall now thy master be.
Oh, Pontifer! thou stately steed,
With speaking eyes, of holy breed.

"Oh, Pontifer! thou nimble steed,
With hoofs that fly with lightning speed,
Why dost thou frolick o'er the plain?
Shall I or Gryba guide thy rein?
Whom wilt thou bear where battle lowers,
Or to the tourney's sparkling bowers?
Oh, Pontifer! thou nimble steed,
With hoofs that fly with lightning speed.

"Oh, Pontifer! thou noble steed,
With heart as true as valour's deed,
Whichever gains thee, still our love,
Shall burn as yon bright sun above.
In brotherly yet daring strife,
We combat, and for death or life,
Oh, Pontifer! thou noble steed,
With heart as true as valour's deed."

When after a time Gryba set out again upon one of his love adventures, he appointed Balta to be Arnald's host, desiring him also to take an opportunity of shewing the Minstrel the wonders of the old castle, which his ancestors had possessed for many hundred years.

This commission Balta one evening called to mind as he quitted with Arnald the gardens of the pleasure-castle; they were returning from one of those splendid feasts, which Soleyma was now in the habit of giving frequently. In an instant Arnald was ready for the travel; they mounted two noble mules and rode, accompanied by a squire, through the still moist darkness of the night, turning

away from the cheerful plain towards a hilly wood-country, which crowned the north side of the brilliant picture, and which had ever appeared to the Troubadour like a mysterious riddle.

It was not long before they came into a lonelier valley; now and then at wide intervals a hut would be visible, with a lamp darkly burning through the window, or with a dying hearth-fire glimmering through the door, that was half open in seeming expectation of the master, who, perhaps, was wandering as a huntsman over the distant hills.

Arnald sang this strain in a subdued voice:

" Upon the world, night's shadows sleep!
Strange is the language of the dale,
Dark is the twilight of the vale,
Low, low, in earth its currents creep.

" Hollow, the song of midnight's wind,
Nothing is like the tongue of man,
And yet, oh child of life's brief span,
How dear the world to all thy kind!"

And again for a time they rode by each other in silence. — Then Balta began to sing thus:

"Urg'd by the throb of dark desire,
A mystic might, a restless motion—
We seek to pierce the night's deep ocean,
To read the morning-heaven's fire.

"Yet somewhere must that power move,
That wakes the thought of worlds to be;
Yet somewhere is infinity,
To recompense the heart of love.

"To weep, while flows the silent tear,
Makes sorrow mild, and passion sweet;
Alas! the reason cannot mete,
What most we wish, what most we fear."

"And yet," said Arnald, in whom, at this simple song, awoke a higher aspiration, a more holy desire,—"And yet we know it when we know the salvation of the world; and you will one day learn it also, with unspeakable delight and certainty."

It was as if another and more power-

ful one had spoken out of him, so unconsciously had the important words glided from his lips, and so little was he able to draw back farther the spiritual veil, when Balta, thrilled by forebodings of the highest truth, spoke not, but gazed on him with inquiring looks. The hour had not come, and they continued their way in silence.

The dark castle walls towered amongst the clouds of night from the summit of a hill, whose sides were clad with pine-trees. It looked like the seat of death and mournful recollection.—"My God!" said Arnald—"and that belongs to thee, friendly Gryba,—and is, moreover, thy paternal castle, perhaps, too, thy birth-place. I have scarcely ever in a hermitage felt so thoroughly, through bone and marrow, the distance of all worldly joy, the nothingness of all human pleasure, as in the sight of this wondrous knightly tower."—

They rode on quickly beneath the pine-tops, that rustled in the winds of night. Single stars threw their green and scanty light upon the path that was seldom trodden. And now Balta took a hunting-horn from his attendant's hand, and blew an announcing summons to the Castellain in long and swelling tones, upon which all sorts of nightly birds started from their sleep and with wild screams fluttered here and there amongst the bushes.

They halted before the moat, and, leaping from the saddle, gave their horses in charge to the attendants: in the meantime a wandering light shone through the many little windows of the castle, now high, now low, now vanishing, and again appearing quickly in some other place. At last it was on the sudden visible behind a turret of the highest tower. He who held it, darkly illumined by its wavering glimmer, was a knightly servant in Moorish

habit, with a grey beard and sable forehead; and he sang out thus into the night:

"Who in midnight's darkning hour
Halts before this darker tower?
Let him choose, a friend or foe,
Whether blood or wine shall flow."

"Crescenzio!"—cried Balta;—and the Negro bowed respectfully; they could then see him hurrying down the steps to receive his guests.

"Crescenzio!" repeated Arnald in an under tone, while within him awoke the recollection of Master Ultramonte and the ruins of Castle Maraviglia. Balta, perceiving how the name disturbed his companion, said, "A Roman hero was so called, of whom you will learn more within. His name passes here for the signal, that a stranger with Gryba's allowance is to see the mysteries of the tower, and the Castellain knows at once how he is to receive him."

The heavy doors rattled, the draw-

bridge slowly sank down with a harsh creaking, and the two friends advanced into the castle; they were received only by the black warder, who now carried a little lamp in the shape of a basilisk, from whose mouth blazed a pale but spreading flame. With dumb humility he conducted the knights to a small arched chamber at the side of the entrance, and, fetching from a cupboard the most costly wines and other noble refreshments, waited upon them in silence. No squire, no page, nor any other servant was to be seen.

After a time, the Castellain advanced to the window, looked out upon the clouds, and said,—

"Midnight is past; whosoever would see the mysteries of the castle, it is the hour—it is the hour—it is the hour!—The twilight looks from above into the lonely halls, with features all of wonder."—His voice sounded indescribably

strange and hollow; it was as if the dead had spoken.

"I understand," said Balta, and, taking the lamp from the table, signed away the mysterious Castellain, who walked out with a humble reverence.

While Arnald and Balta ascended the stone staircase, the latter said, "It is very possible that we may meet a strange pale people in our way. But they are of the kind which one must not speak to, and I pray you, for Heaven's sake, noble master, not to open your mouth to any of them."

He undid a door of oak and they entered an immense hall, upon the walls and arches of which the lamp-light crept uncertainly, and as if with timid search. As they went forward, Arnald saw by the moon-light, now breaking through the clouds upon the windows, that an open door on the other side led into a long suite of rooms,

which were open in like manner. He shuddered coldly at the entrance before him, but he again suppressed the feeling.

Balta went close to the walls, now in this part, now in that, and in the light was visible a crowd of figures, all of infinite beauty but of singular composition. That, which appeared to be a venerable old man, suddenly changed into a wild war of tendrils; where a beautiful female-head was painted, the image was obscured and overclouded by two gigantic butterfly-wings that unfolded themselves from the body of a catterpillar belonging to the angel bust. Lofty trees had the armed feet of knights, and seemed as if they would burst from the walls into the chamber; with gauntletted hands they threatened the beholder horribly, while from out their topmost leaves appeared to grow the features of an angry visage. Gold-coloured lightnings quivered amid all the

images, seeming to be letters of terrific import. Here and there were painted cascades aud fountains, in which fancy saw the eyes of children and the beards of age; but, upon looking more closely, they turned out to be nothing more than the water-foam. And all this was united into one great endless tress-work, where no part could be without the whole, nor the whole without the minutest part.

Some faces seemed familiar to the Minstrel, and were repeated constantly in new and fearful connexions, so that those, which had at first appeared in the guise of age, became younger and younger, the more they advanced into the dark and distant halls. But, as often as he began to reflect hereon, and in the very moment of its growing plain to him, his attention was drawn away by various strange instruments, partly standing out from the walls, and partly planted in the middle of the chamber. Some of these were heaped-up arms,

but in such wonderful order, that one could not help thinking it had a purpose as well as the fearful pictures on the wall, and that there must be some mighty, or even unintended word, which on the sudden would call the whole into a spectral life. Whenever the Minstrel would have asked any question, Balta placed his finger on his lips, with care that was almost anxiety. The evident horror in his face, at other times so calm, awakened strange forebodings. About too lay magic utensils upon tables carefully covered, even to the ground, with broad dark carpets; Arnald recollected the instruments only too well, from the instructions of Ultramonte.

At length they reached a chamber, that seemed to be the farthest in the building; its entrance was veiled by a heavy crimson curtain, worked with many gold-coloured emblems. Arnald for a moment was shaken; he expected to see something terrible behind it, but Balta

hastened thither with visible joy, seized the cord, and, while the curtain was rolling up, made signs to his companion that he should follow him. When both stood without and the cloth had again fallen, he breathed deeply and slowly, like one who had reached a protecting place of refuge.

"Here," he said, "we may speak with our usual openness and confidence, and I may tell you all I know of this strange building, which, in truth, is but little. Here they dare not intrude. But, notwithstanding this, we must away again before the dawn of morning."

The Minstrel gazed upon him inquiringly; and at this a slight shudder, as if in farewell, again passed over Balta. With a visible effort to shake it off he grasped Arnald's arm, and, going to the walls, pointed out to him the paintings which here were interwoven as if in the end and crown of all these wonders; their admirable execution and bold powers of

genius far exceeded, if possible, all in the earlier rooms and galleries.

While Arnald thus walked around with his friend, he suddenly started back, for it was to him as if he saw himself and Balta in a mirror, and a third face beside them of horrible paleness and with features of dreadful severity. He looked over his shoulder timidly for the pale intruder, but nothing of the kind was to be seen; that which he had taken for a glass was a picture.

Balta, not observing the Minstrel's wonder, and, as if lost in the contemplation of the three portraits, said: "That in the middle is the great Minstrel-King, of whom the legend tells so much; that yonder to the right is my ancestor, the profound philosopher Abdul Hamet: and in those features to the left you behold the magic-devoted Roman, Crescenzio, at whose name the gates of the castle but lately opened to us."

"And all three heads," sighed Arnald, "grow up from one high and wondrous nettle-plant."

"Their life, perhaps, was not more cheerful," replied Balta thoughtfully. "You, yourself, know enough of the Minstrel-King's wild and illusive wanderings upon earth."

"But, roses," — interrupted Arnald warmly,—"roses shot up in full strength and splendour amongst the nettles, and even clothed the evil plants of fate—the roses of song, I mean,—the sweet minstrelsy of the persecuted hero and the fame of his knightly deeds,—and I trust, my friend, you will not deny me that."

"God forbid!" replied Balta; "He was chosen as their most glorious model by those two noble heads that lived long after him, and here first, when they thought they had reached the mastery of nature, did they presume to paint their faces by the side of his. You have al-

ready seen him often amongst the shrubs and the flowers, but old and satiate of life. Here they have represented him as a man fresh and vigorous, trusting that the art, which in silence he took with him to the grave, might by their researches again be animated with youthful fullness."

"Balta!"—said the Minstrel shuddering,—"Balta! If this fearful art should be able to give eternal youth on earth!—If you should be the all-powerful Abdul Hamet himself—for look!—the picture is your very image!"

Balta shrunk together, covered his face with both hands, and softly murmured; "You mock me.—But you surely are the old Minstrel-King who has renewed himself from his ashes. It comes across me as the lightning and the thunder-bolt—you are in every lineament and character his very image."

Both for a long time were silent in ter-

ror.—At length they approached each other with reviving courage, laid hand in hand, and fixed eye on eye.—Balta first spoke;

"We both are very like our ancestors, but yet are not those ancestors—we are only their new-sprung scions; and shall we not then take our heritage?"

Arnald inclined his head in silent affirmation.

"His choicest work," continued Balta, "lies behind this painting. Here, I think, we shall be fully agreed. In this castle did Gryba's ancestors give an asylum to the friend of Arnold, the brave, the learned Crescenzio of Rome, when your Christendom had rejected him. He then concealed here that magic volume of which there must be a transcript in the ruins of your paternal castle. None but a Maraviglia can free from darkness these leaves of mystery, and it is no bad thing that a descendant of Abdul Hamet is at

his side. Gryba wills this earnestly, and here are hammer, wedge, and chisel, to break the stones; they have been consecrated to this work for many years."

With this he took from a shelf the instruments that were formed of gold and silver, and held them out to Arnald.

"Let me reflect a moment only," said the Minstrel;—"and be not, however, anxious. All my pulses are throbbing with desire; I well believe that I shall do after the wish of yourself and Gryba."

CHAPTER VII.

THE Troubadour paced up down in agitation, but his mind, confused by the horrors of the tower, soon gave itself up to to his early love of the mysterious and that longing after Arnold of Brescia's lessons, which had cost his race so dearly.

"I *will*," he said,—and caught at the wonderful instrument. In the act, his hand grazed against a costly shrine, from the azure ground of which sparkled the golden constellation that for him was Alearda. Ashamed and terror-struck he again paused, leant his hand against his forehead, and at length asked; "For Heaven's sake, Balta, how does this image come here?"

"It marks the shrine, wherein Gryba keeps the jewel, for which we are to combat."

"Oh, warning angel!" sighed Maraviglia, and bent deeply before the beloved symbol.—Long did he stand in deep and penitent reflection,—then he said:

"Return the instruments to their place, dear Balta. Alearda wills not this from me, and oh!—she is now, as ever, so clearly, so heavenly right,—and yet I was so near forgetting it in that decisive moment!"

The melancholy determination in Arnald's tone and manner stifled all that Balta might have yet urged in favour of his wishes. Sighing, but with friendly yielding, he returned the instruments to their former place.

On a sudden he started up in terror—his eye had by chance fallen on the window,—and he exclaimed; "I believe the morning twilight is advancing in light streaks upon the hills. Oh, let us hasten to leave these dusky halls!"

These words, instead of alarming the Minstrel, visited his soul like a cheer-

ful foreboding,—cheerful, though but imperfectly understood. He hastened, however, to follow Balta's entreating signals and only greeted the shrine as if in farewell—" A speedy and joyful meeting, oh! thou hidden brilliance."

In the meantime Balta had drawn up the curtain, but remained standing at the door with fixed and fearful looks. He pointed onwards, and whispered; " By Heavens! they sit there already and feast together!"

And Arnald, approaching, saw that a blueish light shimmered from all the walls in the farther rooms, while many figures, men and women, sate about a long table in antiquated habits, and solemnly pledged each other. Instead of pages a multitude of quaint dwarfs tripped up and down, glimmering all over in a greenish fire like the glow-worm.

" These knights and dames," whispered Balta in the Minstrel's ear, " did, for the most part, live in the time of the

Goths, long before we Arabs came into the land. King Roderigo, by whose wild passions the kingdom fell, is generally wont to have the upper seat at the table. But later dames and heroes also sit there. Amongst others there is a murmur of Crescenzio."

"If he should invite us to sit with them at table," said Arnald in unconscious dream, but at the same time horror-struck at his own words—and the more so when upon this two tall figures with links and ashy faces strode solemnly and statelily through the chamber, as if commissioned to proffer the dreadful invitation. But Balta immediately let fall the curtain, and all was still.

"How could you forget yourself so impiously?"—asked the Moor after awhile; and Arnald replied:—"Is it then to be wondered at, if, amidst the horrors of this wild night and this mysterious castle, all does not go on in its appointed course?—But I know the remedy."

He took the lyre from his shoulders and began to tune it.

"Will you touch the lyre," cried Balta,—"and those shapes of the grave are banqueting without?"

"You know not, my friend, of whom I intend to sing," said Arnald smiling. "But patience only! Peace shall soon flow again softly and holily through your bosom; and that will not proceed from my song, but from the mistress to whom that song is dedicated."

He touched the strings and sang:

"Image of that beauty, pure as bright,
That in the endless blue of Heaven reigns!
The mead and object of our golden strains!
To this dark world of earth a guiding light!
The fount of valour's high and knightly deeds!
The star that brightens death when fainting valour bleeds.

"May I then praise thee, thou immortal flower,
As I would praise thee?—with the heart of love—
Then rise, my song, to yon blue skies above;
The world's asleep, and night has toll'd her hour,
And spectres watch before the portal way,
And no ear dully wakes to listen and betray.

"Full many a heart would quail at this dread sight,
But, oh! thou form of Heaven, no fear shakes me,
My life has ever been the praise of thee,
Thy glory still has been my guiding light;
Let it be mine that glory aye to sing,
And life itself no richer joys can bring.

"Who has e'er seen dear woman's mildness yoke
With woman's loftiness? Or who
Has ever seen that gentle blossoms grew
On dignity's proud stem of hardest oak?
Arnald can tell where both are blent in one,
A recompense to him for song and battle done.

"The sun looks through these halls with cheerful face,
Morning breaks freshly from the ocean wave;
Down, therefore, spectres! Down into the grave:
Yet take my thanks, ye shades of hero-race,
For, that beneath your ward those praises flow
Which fancy long since fram'd, but rev'rence dar'd not show."

Balta smiled cheerfully, and said; "Let us hasten to the fair sea-coast. Your mind is in truth too clear for these gloomy shades of magic."

With this they returned again into the mystic chambers. When they had reached the farthest hall, Balta again shuddered, and whispered to his companion; "It seems

to me as if the pale Crescenzio were still lurking in that corner—" but Arnald answered,—" Do not look upon him. That is the sort of enemy, from which one may avert the eyes with honour."

And thus saying he dragged him onwards. Both were soon without the castle, and rode on placidly in the coolness of the morning.

CHAPTER VIII.

SPRING began by degrees to open his beaming eyes upon this lovely country. Arnald, who joyed in the near decision, rode out daily on his Arabian war-horse given to him by Gryba for the earnest hour, and practised himself in hurling the javelin after the Moorish fashion; the Queen, Soleyma, had settled beforehand that the battle should commence in this manner.

Gryba had just returned from his expedition, and showed much satisfaction at Maraviglia's having refused to open the mysterious wall. "In the first place," said he, "it would would have been a pity, for the sake of the splendid pictures—for who knows whether the mouldering old book behind is half as lovely,—and next

it infinitely pleases me, that our dear Minstrel likes the intercourse with those dark mysteries as little as I do. Oh, heavens! This dear, blooming, variable life is so infinitely beautiful! I always think, that when we grasp its secret roots too violently, the blossom withers on its delicate and fragrant branches."

Although Arnald saw this in a great measure differently from Gryba, he could not however but sincerely love the pure and simple spirit in which it was spoken. But the more delightfully Gryba's open gaiety and Balta's cheerful calmness spoke to his heart in the love which both showed to him, the more awful seemed the event of the near combat for life and death. Often when he had galloped his warhorse and darted the light javelin, while the two friends looked on in wondering delight, he would fling himself from the saddle with moist eyes, and the three would then mournfully embrace each other and separate in silence with

downcast spirits. Arnald had yet this consolation—that which was undertaken for the honour of chaste dames, and particularly of Alearda, must lead to a joyful end, however the clouds of earth might show themselves dark and threatningly.

Frequently, however, did Soleyma's rich festivals throw such a brilliance over whole days that little room was left for serious meditation. These she well knew how to arrange and conduct with the purest elegance, the most pleasing discrimination, the most liberal profuseness, and thus to convert her pleasure castle into a temple immeasurably rich in all the splendour of the earth.

It was at one of these festivals that they sate beneath the golden portico of the palace, while, in the clear mid-day, the spring, more and more victorious over winter, breathed its warming airs on the sea and on the land;—Soleyma bade the Minstrel take his lyre, and accompany one of her recitations with single chords,

as he had often done before. Such tales were always most delightful from her lovely lips. For though, with all the richness of her gifts, that of song had not been imparted to the Queen, yet it was her's, now with blooming fancy to invent romance, and now to revive the fable of the olden time, while the words ever stood at her command in winged array, like spirits joying in their service. It once happened at a recitation of this kind, that Arnald involuntarily struck his lyre, and Soleyma ever afterwards delighted in the accompanyment, as did all the listeners, and particularly Balta. For the first time, the whole appeared in all its loveliness and splendour.

And now Soleyma related the old legends of the enchanter Virgil,—how he had erected magic towers, and on them prophecying statues,—how he had mocked and punished his adversaries—guided the storm and tamed the ocean. Arnald's strains accorded fearfully, for the horrors

of Castle Maravigha, of Gryba's tower, and of Ultramonte's mystic lessons, thrilled through his soul; it was only by an effort, that he was able, when Soleyma passed over to the loves of Virgil, to glide on his side also into sweet and passionate accords. But, perhaps it was by this very effort that he succeeded so much the better, for Soleyma gazed upon him with moist yet sparkling eyes, and at length concluded her tale with these verses:

"As all the joys of earth decay,
So Virgil too hath past away;
Bid me not speak the mournful tale,
'Twould only waken sorrow's wail.
Oh, Virgil! can we nought retain?
Are all life's pleasures bright in vain?
Immortal Minstrel, well I know
Whence these your secret powers flow;
Dwells in your verse the magic fire;
Dwells there, too, love with wild desire;
The poet's magic is of Heaven,
All other is from darkness given;
And mighty was that power in thee,
Thou noblest prince of minstrelsy.

Oh, Virgil! did you only stray
Where purblind sorrow led the way?"

Maraviglia's harp echoed in the softest vibrations, while a look from Soleyma of indescribable sweetness shone on him in reward,—or, one might almost have thought, in promise.—Arnald well remembered that she had cast on him such looks before;—his fingers began to wander over the strings in dreamlike melody;—but with a visible effort the beautiful Moorish Queen arose and, smiling, said; "How we become a blended portion of such tales while we recite them!"—Arnald ended his tune with a few powerful discordant snatches, which Soleyma did not seem to notice. She turned away from him proudly, and, when the call to table was sounded, for this time took Balta for her companion.

CHAPTER IX.

When the repast was over, all dispersed through the wide labyrinths of the garden-grounds, which were fenced in with young shrubs as with a green veil of clouds; some went in groups, others in pairs, according as passion brought together the knights and dames in the sweet converse of love, while many a longing heart, not yet inspirited to the last confession, retired into solitude. Arnald, too, sought the latter, although with other feelings. The joyful hope of conquering for Alearda, and of soon returning into her heavenly presence, contended with the grief that vexed his soul on account of his gay and noble rivals. In gentle melancholy he past through the walks of pines and larches that were now first breathed upon by the spring, and he felt as if he must here by some wonder meet his lofty mistress. A short time only,

and a waving snow-white garment, such as Alearda used to wear, glittered towards him through the boughs of the trees and shrubs; now it disappeared in the windings of the path or behind the gentle slopes,—now again came nearer and nearer, and with each moment Arnald more plainly recognized the modest dress of the Provençal women; there was also visible a broad white bonnet, like a pilgrim's hat,—such as he had often seen on Alearda—while the dark locks flowed from under it in ringlets and formed a delightful contrast with the snowy vestments and the dazzling whiteness of the forehead. Arnald scarcely knew whether he was awake or dreamt; there was an echo in his heart like the melody of a solemn chaunt—the wonderful tales of the enchanter Virgil arose to his fancy, connected with all of supernatural that he had seen through life—it seemed to him as if his desire had unconsciously awakened some exorcising power, and he hastened towards the vision with fearful expecta-

tion. At this instant it had vanished behind a thicket of cedars, but the path, which it had struck into, led of necessity to Arnald, unless it were a fading thing of air.

And so, indeed, it happened. As the Knight wound about the cedar-thicket and entered into an alley of lofty pomegranate trees, the figure stood close before him, almost as much in terror as himself—but it was not Alearda—it was Soleyma.

Recovering herself quickly, the Queen said, "By this surprise you have spoilt a surprise intended to yourself. I wished this evening to meet you in the middle of the dance as a Provençal, with a whole train of females, similarly attired, and now,—"

She hesitated, and looked down on the earth in sweet confusion.—Then again she raised her eyes, and, laughing heartily, continued;—

"Well, and now the chief object is

accomplished, and I, like a true fool, am astonished at it.—Alas! Just so weak and silly are we human beings for the most part in our deepest projects."

She took the Troubadour's arm, and suffered him to lead her up and down the extensive alleys. This unexpected familiarity, after her former coldness, fell upon his soul, like the sun-beams on a gray mist-morning.

A pleasant discourse arose on the unity of all human life in its apparent diversity, and how every climate, allotted by Heaven to the poet, became his own, provided his mind were pure and his heart noble. She weaved the web of a Minstrel-life such as it might be, setting it before him in more rich and wondrous colours than he had ever dared to imagine it in his dreams—and many a spark fell glowingly into his susceptible heart — and many a voice within cried out with foolish power, that here was his right, his joyful goal on earth,—that his former longings

were an insubstantial illusion, a joyless error of the fancy!—

He must have often answered in this perverted tone of feeling, for Soleyma looked more and more kindly on him, and the magic words flowed with increasing sweetness from her lips. At this moment a dove flew closely over them, and an olive-leaf dropped from its beak upon Arnald's ringlets.

"Oh, dove of Noah!" he involuntarily exclaimed, — "Oh, holy faith of Christ!—Oh, Provence, rich in olive-woods! land of my forefathers!"—and there was yet another dear name that he longed to utter, but for this time he kept it in his loving heart, unspoken.

Soleyma gazed upon him with that proud dissatisfaction which she so well knew how to fling into her lovely eyes. It seemed as if every thing were open to her that was now passing in Arnald's faithful breast—"Master Virgilius, with all his magic arts, was nothing better

than a fool!" she exclaimed with a spiteful laugh, and, relinquishing his arm, hastened to her women, who had for some time appeared at the farther end of the alley.

In the meantime Arnald became conscious in all its extent of the misery to which he would have devoted himself by yielding to this allurement so infinitely sweet; he saw the near disgust of Soleyma,—his own feelings torn, broken, and impure,—the unsatisfied desire of the senses, which sooner or later must have been ejected from this magic garden. —In finding himself saved from the abyss, he well knew that it had not been done by the dove alone with her olive-leaf; he knew, indeed, that he must have irretrievably fallen, but that God had vouchsaved him to see in time a heavenly messenger upon the earth. Hereupon he went into a distant arbour, and kneeling down gave honour to the Lord, and prayed that he might be allowed to serve the angel Alearda, fittingly, and purely, and virtuously.

CHAPTER X.

The beams of the clearest evening red were upon him as he left the arbour, when Balta met him, and taking his hand with graceful affection, said, "It ever fills me with indescribable delight when I see you thus, in that calm unbroken cheerfulness which is your proper element. I can better endure the earth-clouds anywhere than when they presume to sadden the life of minstrelsy. And—do not think me too intruding,—I must candidly confess that the golden nets, which are here laid for you with so much captivating art and practice, made me fear your falling into a harder contest than any which awaits us in the lists. But you now come out from the shadows of the arbour so clear and so serene, that

the evening beams, which glow with such brightness on you, seem but the reflection of your brighter spirit."

"Friend of my heart," replied Arnald, "that I can pass by the syren's song is not a thing for wonder. You know how pure an orb rules over me, at once my guide and my protection. For though it is true that I have long sailed on the sea of life, and have seen with deep sorrow, many a noble spirit in its whirlpools vainly struggling for help, and sinking at last in anguish, yet I gratefully allow that it is only the brightness of my star that saves me from the wreck and from the waters. But, Balta, what saves you, the youth, the glowing artist, alive to every beauty? What is it so wonderfully protects you, that amidst all your noble gallantry, amidst all these blooming beds of loveliness, I never yet have seen the flame of passion burning in your eyes?"

Balta drooped his head, and for awhile remained silent. At length he again

raised it, as if glorified, to heaven, and said, " Why should I conceal the dearest and fairest secret of my soul from one whom my soul so dearly loves? Know, then, noble Arnald, that within me lives an image of transcendant beauty, to which nothing of earth can approach in grace, or dignity, or sweetness: hence I feel myself bound to love and honour the whole race of women generally, but not to tie my affection, or dedicate my exclusive service, to any one individually that lives on this imperfect earth."

" And where then is the picture," asked Arnald, " in which your skillful pencil has fixed her inspiring charms, and animated them with the brilliance of colour?"

" Her picture?" cried Balta, and drew back with visible shuddering,—" Her picture!—For Heaven's sake, forbear!—Though I may sometimes show fair faces and earthly beauty amidst foliage and on flower-stems, as if springing from them,

yet never should I dare to confine my lofty vision within the poor circle of terrestrial art!—She, my heavenly mistress! She to be called into light as the head of a sportive world of plants!"

"But why must it be precisely so?" asked Arnald. "Image her rather in her perfect form, with the most splendid garments waving round her, glittered around with stars, and clouds above her for a canopy!"

"'Tis thus that she appears to me," interrupted Balta anxiously,—"'tis thus that she appears to me; but how did you know it? And, if you do know it,—by God and his prophets!—who inspired you with the bold and fearful thought that such a vision could be painted?—I see now, it is no fable; your christian artists dare to mimic the Creator and represent the perfect forms of man, not thinking where they are to get the souls to animate their shadows. Dreadful enough for such bold exorcists, when

in the re-collection and re-ordering of all things, these images throng about them in fearful crowds, and ask more and more anxiously for the souls that should belong to them! And if I had thus to answer my image,—mine own,—my blessed image—Oh! how much more dreadful would it be with me than with the host of your impious painters!"

"You will, however, one day paint her," said Arnald slowly and softly,—"and will be very happy,—or rather very blessed."

It had happened to him with these words, as in that night when he had accompanied Balta to the mysterious tower. He had spoken more, and of loftier things, than he himself was conscious of in the moment of their utterance, and he meditated intently upon the deep peculiar import of his words. Balta too did the same, while, without either thinking of it, they approached

the castle, that now again glittered in festal splendour.

The dazzling beams of light from the windows fell almost painfully upon the eyes of the two friends as they advanced from out a blooming thicket.—"It is now high time," said Arnald that we should hasten our combat. This doubtful state, dear Balta, is no longer fitting, for the spring is here already."

"True indeed!" replied Balta with suppressed melancholy.—And on the same evening he and Arnald and Gryba came solemnly before the Queen, requesting with earnest courtesy, that she would appoint the day of battle.

"To-morrow, if you will," replied Soleyma, turning away with haughty greeting, and the feast, for that day, was over.

CHAPTER XI.

"From out the Heavens' high and roseate towers,
The sun looks down in all his morning pride,
Pours forth a thousand hues on ocean's tide,
And wreathes the brow of earth with new-born flowers.

"Oft in old days, gone by like rolling waves,
What time young morning op'd her sparkling eye,
The Maraviglias have gone forth to die,
Or dig for foemen honourable graves.

"To day 'midst joyful echoes of the lyre,
In arms that glitter to the morning's light,
A Maraviglia hastens to the fight,
Where honour's sons for honour's mead aspire.

"Sires of our race, the Maraviglia's source!—
Thou, Minstrel-King, the Maraviglia's pride!—
Be ye in death a Maraviglia's guide,
Bless your lone scion in his knightly course;

"Oh! let me once my lofty mistress greet,
After the battle nobly fought and won,—
Nobly as those which valour erst hath done,—
And bend my laurell'd brow before her feet;

"If fate resolves I perish in the strife,
For her I die;—The gates of Heaven expand,
Op'd like the gates of morn by angel hand;
And death is sweet that leads to endless life."

On the morning of the decisive combat Arnald sang these words with a loud and joyful voice in the beautiful room upon the chesnut tree that was now covered about with blossoms; Gryba too beat his sword and shield together in merry echo; thus both chased, or attempted to chase, the melancholy which seized them when they thought of being opposed to each other as enemies; and in truth their passion for battle grew more and more brilliant and exclusive.

Gryba in his golden scale-armour,—he had for this day laid aside his black garment of mail—stood there ready for the battle, glittering royally in all the slimness of his lofty figure. Arnald too fastened Alearda's dagger to the silver chain above the gold wire of the shirt of mail, seized two javelins of the finest ebony, the sharp points of which sparkled with fire, and then both hastened to the steeds, that were already neighing for their masters.

The honest Provençal wept bitterly as he led the Arabian to Maraviglia.—"Good lad!" exclaimed the friendly Moor, and flung into his hat a well-filled purse. "I know, indeed, that money will not exactly comfort you, but still it is a gratification."

"May God reward you for it," said the peasant amidst his tears,—"May God reward you for it, as far as he can reward a wild Heathen bird.—And you, my noble Sir Arnald, if you positively must kill him, at least contrive it so that he may not have long to struggle."

Heartily laughing, Gryba jumped into the saddle; the light-coloured charger bounded under him, and his mane fluttered wildly to the air in its silvery brightness. But Gryba moved not on the purple cloth, and stroaking the horse's slender neck, exclaimed, "Oho, my steed! my gallant steed! Would you play Pontifer?"

Arnald and Gryba hurried to the place of battle with pace so light and swift that their coursers' hoofs scarcely bent the grass.

And now from a beautiful grassy eminence, on which stood his little tower, came Balta, grave and earnest, but for this time in splendid attire; the wide garments waved solemnly about him, after the Moorish fashion; on the other hand there was a strange discord in the sword that glittered upon his thigh, straightly formed in the Christian mode, while the two silvery spears in his right hand gave token of the genuine warfare of the Saracens.

As soon as he perceived his friends, he urged his horse to its fullest speed, and soon pulled up beside them with grave yet friendly greeting from his brilliant eyes. All three shook hands and gazed thoughtfully on each other.

Then Arnald spoke; "Let it happen as it may; the pleasure of brotherhood

we will enjoy beforehand in friendly confidence. Is it not so, my brave companions,—we now are brothers?"

The youths embraced him with deep emotion, and gently echoed—"We now are brothers;"—While the gallant steeds, as if animated by the affection of their masters, at the same time bent their slim necks towards each other in caresses.

"Up!—up!—my young heroes, to the battle!" cried Arnald, with the sounding voice that was so peculiar to him in the days of honourable peril,—and the friends separated, while their horses with joyful neighings reared into air, and again descended with regulated bounds. Already were their riders about to give them the rein for their farther journey, when Gryba said;

"Yet for a moment patience. My squire yonder carries with him a flask of the noblest sherry, which at first I had intended for the refreshment of the

wounded, but for that the ladies will provide; besides it seems sweeter and worthier that we should now empty it in full spirits to our brotherhood, while each moreover adds a pledge to that which is dearest to him upon earth."

At a sign from him the squire brought a little splendid flask, and Arnald, being entreated to drink first, did so in three draughts, and said;

"Alearda!—My country!—An honourable fame in death!"

The turn came to Balta, who added;

"The image that none beside myself have seen!—The dear art of painting!—Our friendship!"

And Gryba concluded;

"All handsome women!—A life in their recollections!—If so it may be, many joyful battles yet upon earth."

With this they bounded to the place of battle, whence the kettle-drums, and horns, and trumpets sounded to them in solemn welcome.

CHAPTER XII.

A WIDE and perfect circle received the three knights; around in a joyful crowd stood the people, who, after the careless and almost thoughtless fashion of the Saracens, thronged together to see the approaching fight for life and death, as if it had been a pleasant game. Upon scaffolds, spread over with rich cloths and pillows, sate the lovely women, and, beneath a sky-blue canopy, the loveliest of all, the Queen Soleyma. She was indescribably charming and magnificent to behold in her attire blazing with jewels, and her head encircled by a splendid turban that did not veil the dark beauty of her locks, but rather made their sportive twines so much the lovelier. Gryba's warmest glances wandered up to her, and she seemed to remark it with a smile of sa-

tisfaction. Even Arnald, when the three combatants passed by her in salutation, sank his dazzled head to earth as he had done at her first appearance. But soon recurred to memory the recollection of Alearda,—how at the feast on the plain before Castle Bisiers she had beamed so calmly and beneficently upon the hill—how one of her pure and angel glances had even met his wondering eye—and then he could gaze undazzled on the sun of earthly beauty which here poured its light upon the field of battle. When, guided by two Moorish knights he had taken his place, his eyes fell upon the opposite Balta. The youthful artist for a moment lifted his mild and glowing eye to Soleyma, but in the next he raised it more mildly and more glowingly to the free unclouded heavens, and Arnald well understood what it meant, and what image was then appearing to him from above.

It was not yet decided who should first fight with Arnald. Four pages there-

fore advanced to Gryba and Balta with a large silver vase, and four others with a lofty pedestal covered with purple cloth, on which they carefully laid down the vessel: then to each of the knights was handed a pair of costly dice that were formed of the purest gold, and the characters of inlaid jewels. Gryba threw first—he looked into the vase dissatisfied. When Balta's dice were cast, four old Moorish princes, who stood there as umpires, declared that to him belonged the first combat. All now quitted the circled space except the champions; even Gryba rode slowly out of the lists.

A loud trumpet-cry sounded over the plain with fearful hoarseness; Arnald and Balta immediately spurred on their horses in a circle, with the swiftness of lightning, and flying round close upon the borders continued thus to aim their javelins at each other. During this they rose up in the broad stirrups, and, with the left shoulder advanced, held the shield defen-

sively, now before the face, now before the breast, according as the lance of the opponent seemed to take a menacing direction. The well-trained chargers meantime ran unwearily and in equal gallop round the appointed circle, without needing the spur or the bridle.

On a sudden, Balta's lance whizzed through the air; in its well-aimed flight it rebounded from Arnald's opposing shield amongst the spectators, who at first made way for it with loud cries, but in the next moment contended for the glittering weapon with shouts and laughter.

Immediately upon this Balta threw his second lance. This slightly grazed the neck of Arnald's horse, and without any farther damage sank into the turf nearly an ell deep. In the same instant Arnald also threw his javelin, but as Balta, angry at the vain cast of his lances, was rushing upon him with drawn sword, the weapon of the Provençal struck the wheeling horse instead of the knight, and

precisely in the forehead, causing him to rear up wildly, and fall back with his rider. The animal, however, struggled up again in an instant, rushed desperately over the field with the lance still in his forehead, and dragged up and down the unhorsed knight, whose left spur was sticking firmly in the splendid saddle-cloth. A loud cry of horror burst from the crowd of spectators, and still more scared the horse that was already maddened by his wound.

"Jesu!" cried Arnald, and was out of the saddle instantly. With desperate hazard he crossed the animal's path, and held it by the bridle in all the lion-strength of wrathful terror. The mad creature plunged and bit at Arnald, but the Minstrel neither yielded nor wavered; and at length gave him so violent a jerk upon the curb-chain that he again fell back, but fortunately not on Balta. By this time the grooms and pages were at hand; Balta was freed from the horsecloth

without farther injury, and the foaming animal was led out of the lists.

Somewhat pale from the fall and the nearness of death, but collected and friendly as ever, Balta now advanced to Arnald and said, "Oh! noble hero, right brotherly hast thou gained thy battle. My share in the starry ornament is thine."

He had spoken this aloud with his utmost effort, and horns and the rejoicing sound of harps announced the Minstrel's victory; many garlands too, woven of the earliest spring-flowers, were showered from lovely hands upon the valiant Troubadour.

"Good luck to you in your last trial," said Balta, smiling, and he retired exhausted from the lists.

Fresh and cheerful, Sir Gryba entered them, saluted the Queen courteously, his opponent kindly, and again the circle-course began with the swiftness of the wind. The Moor's ungovernable passion for fighting, and Arnald's thirst

and hope of victory allowed but little space for aiming: Both flung their javelins, and nearly at the same time, but with fearful certainty. Gryba's head and hip, and Arnald's right shoulder, streamed with blood. The latter, indeed, drew his sword, but he felt his arm weak and heavy from the dropping wound.—"I may perhaps die," thought he to himself, "but never will I return without the starry-ornament."

Gryba flung himself from the saddle and exclaimed,—"Come on to the fight, brave Maraviglia, sword to sword and arm to arm, and let the horses go."

Painfully, but yet with knightly grace, sprang Arnald from his charger, and flung the shield behind his back; then, grasping his sword with both hands and swinging it aloft for a fearful blow, he rushed upon his adversary.

The Moor also had let his shield fall back by its purple bands, although with a very different object. His sabre hung

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by its thongs upon his wrist.—With the left arm he received Arnald's crushing sword-blow, that burst all the golden plaits of his mail, but left the skin and the garments uninjured; in the next moment he had run in upon his antagonist, grasped him around with both arms, and with nervous agility flung him to the earth. Kneeling upon his breast, he exclaimed;

"The starry ornament is mine, brave Arnald."

"My life perhaps!"—cried Arnald, in reply,—"The star-ornament never while I breathe."

Gryba struggled to force the sword-hilt from him. At last Arnald, letting go the grasp of his left hand, and clinging to it desperately with the fingers of his wounded right arm, felt for Alearda's dagger; the little shining weapon quickly drew forth a rich stream of blood from Gryba where the golden scales had before been rent asunder.

The Moor started up in the thrill of agony—by the violent exertion of his

last strength Maraviglia wound himself from under him,—and now each stood opposite to the other, pale, bleeding, breathless, and leaning upon his sword. A wondering, melancholy silence lay upon the collected people.

Arnald was the first that endeavoured to rouse himself to a fresh attack. He did indeed, although with visible effort, raise up his sword in both hands, and with noble carriage advanced to strike. But after a few steps only he was forced to halt, and again his sword stuck in the earth, and again his hands, clinging to the hilt, upheld his feebleness with difficulty. Gryba, on the other side, with all his exertions could not move from his supporting sabre. With every moment he became paler and paler, and the blood welled more and more hotly from his wounds.

By virtue of their knightly presidence over the lists, the three old Moorish chiefs came forward and willed that the combat should for the present end, not to be renewed until the perfect recovery

of the noble combatants. Thereupon the squires advanced to lead them from the place of battle, but Arnald with commanding earnestness signed back those upon his side, which Gryba perceiving exerted his last strength to do the same.

"That the combat is to end here for to-day,"—said Arnald, raising his voice as high as possible,—"well and good,—I must be so contented. But that we are not to fight out what has been here begun, until our perfect recovery,—no, dear Gryba,—you must yourself see it,—that will not do. I have waited long enough for this battle; I dare not, I will not, protract any more this state of indecision. Look to it, Gryba; from this moment I declare war against you for the starry-ornament. Wherever it may be,—by day or by night,—secretly or openly—I will take it from you; and you know that I am acquainted with the place where you preserve it. Hide it therefore,—in friendship I so advise you—hide it in some other place,—but there also I will seek

it,—and there also will I seize it, or ere long will perish."

"God forbid the latter!" exclaimed the Moor in friendly accents, and sank by degrees with gentle weariness upon the place of battle.—"But," he added, again raising himself in joyful pride,—"I am not mortally wounded, and therefore you have not yet gained the jewel. It shall not, however, from its place, for dreadful warders keep watch upon that chamber—yourself have seen them, Masaviglia. Over and above, I will myself, henceforth, inhabit the lower halls of the castle, and so, dear brother, I accept your feud."

With difficulty the Minstrel tottered to him;—They joined hand to hand;—And both now signed to the squires, who came forward with litters, and bore the champions from the circle. The women left their seats in admiration; the crowd separated in dull and whispered wonder; Soleyma with pale face and tearful eyes returned to her magic castle.

CHAPTER XIII.

A VIOLENT wound-fever soon fell upon Arnald, who now had taken up his abode in Balta's little tower. Sometimes he would fancy himself fighting for the star-ornament, at others he would imagine himself to be his grandsire, who lay in the midst of his enemies, beneath his bleeding horse; and often in these violent emotions would he tear away the bandages. It was then that the glowing blood gushed forth violently, and poured its purple stains upon the white coverlid of the bed, until the invalid sank back in deep exhaustion; then only did the gentle and accustomed smile pass over his pallid lips.

At length the physician said,—"Two such paroxysms more, and we shall have to bury the noble Minstrel beneath the spring-flowers of our country."

Balta had watched day and night by

Arnald's bed, like a protecting angel, though without being able hitherto to check these accesses of delirium; still he thought, with moist eyes but with his wonted calmness, on the preservation of his friend. At last he seemed to have discovered something, for he took Maraviglia's lute from the wall with a cheerful smile, and placed himself again by the bed of the sick man who at that moment began to be perturbed. He then played the autumn melody which Arnald had once sung to Alearda in the castle-gardens, at the time of her presenting him with the poignard. The Minstrel listened; the wild sparkling of his eyes subsided—but when, upon this, Balta sang the words of the strain with sweetest voice, then Arnald laid back his smiling face upon the pillow and gently slumbered.

With the advance of night he again started up as before, and the black wings of phantasy again were rustling over

him; but scarcely did Balta touch the strings when he became calm and gentle. Looking through the open window into the nighted Heaven he at once recognized Alcarda's constellation, and again there came upon him a soft and healing slumber.

As often from that time as his mind began to waver, the lovely name of his mistress had only to glide over Balta's lips, and all was well and quiet.

Thus from day to day his health grew better. His right arm, indeed, still continued weak and heavy, but the clear joyous light of the mind and the warm flame of feeling again burnt up in their clear and perfect consciousness.

Of Gryba's condition the most favourable reports were abroad. He had already so far recovered that he could ride out in the woods upon his Arabian. This, however, he never ventured but about the time of morning twilight; it was then only that he considered the star-ornament to be perfectly

safe from Arnald, and then on account of the spectral warders who guarded the entrance to the chamber. For the rest, the castle was most carefully closed and watched by day and night, so that it seemed as if the boldest enterprize of Maraviglia could not help him to his object.

One day a shepherd gave Balta the following rhymes from Gryba to the Minstrel:

"Close besieg'd, as once Marsiglia
By Imperial Charles' powers,
Here I pine for love and pleasure,
In my dark and lonely towers.

"There's a voice in wood and fountain
Calls me to the dance of mirth;
Yet I brood here, like some spirit,
O'er a treasure deep in earth.

"While our fairest maidens trip it,
By the orange-shaded grove,
Here must I, in darkness watching,
Lose the dearest sports of love.

"Have I in life's early summer,
Quite forsworn then, pleasure's taste,
Giving up for love of virtue,
Love more warm though not so chaste?

"Let me drink again, dear Minstrel,
Free delight on plains as free;
Let me conquer—let me perish,—
Only let it quickly be."

"Friend of my heart, you shall have your will," said Arnald smiling. Hereupon he rose up from his couch, girded on Alearda's dagger,—for his wounded arm was not yet able to use the sword,—and called to his squire to prepare a mule for himself and for his master. During this he gazed with unwonted cheerfulness upon the mild brilliance of eve, that was softly beaming from the Heavens.

"Arnald! Arnald!" cried the astonished Balta,—"For God's sake! What, are you about?"

"I will help myself and our friend at the same time from this distress," replied Maraviglia. "Precisely at the dawn of morning I hope to reach his castle, and you will do well to get ready a good repast and some excellent wine

by the mid-day of to-morrow, for I shall be with you again in that hour with the star-ornament."

"You will!"—said Balta, and the words almost froze upon his lips.—"You will!—But at least take me with you."

"To what purpose, dear friend? After all I must go alone into the castle; for how should I dare to appear before my mistress with the conquered jewel, if any one else had assisted me in the deed?"

"And Crescenzio, and the bloody Goth-King, Rodrigo, and all the fearful dames and heroes long since departed—Arnald, you are not yet perfectly recovered; if the delirium of fever should attack you again while in those halls—"

"Dear Balta, I take with me an angel's name, by the sweet sound of which you have often calmed and healed me in my feverish hours. And, Balta, there

lives within me another and a higher name,—"

"A higher name than Alearda!"

"A name, before which Alearda as myself must bend her spirit; a name which for all eternity unites us and all men who seek and struggle for the truth."

"Arnald! God and the Prophet are my witnesses that I seek and struggle for the truth. Why then do I not bear that name within me?"

"You do bear that name within you, dearest friend; and will one day learn to give it utterance."

Balta inclined his head in profound awe that to himself was unintelligible. By this time the peasant had brought the mules. Arnald kissed Balta's forehead, and entered upon his strange journey, in a more serious, but not less cheerful, temper.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE heavenly wain and the constellation, Alcarda, were declining toward the hills; the mist-clouds of the morning were rising from the valley; all was silent in the woods, for the feathered choir were not yet awake, and the birds of prey, worn out by their nightly violence, had sunk into the sleep of morning; the stag and the roe had not yet begun their mirthful sports.—And now Arnald bade his squire wait silently with the mules in the thicket, while himself advanced slowly to Gryba's fearful tower, concealed in his progress by the pine-trees.

He had not gone far, when he heard the gates of the castle open, and the draw-bridge creak upon its hinges as it was let down below. Soon after,

Gryba's hunting-horn sounded merrily through the forest, the deer started in terror from their lairs, and the young hero rushed down the mountain's side far, far away from Arnald, without suspecting any danger to his castle, and therefore looking neither right nor left.

Arnald approached the building cautiously.

Within was a wild mirth and tumult, and the Minstrel at first imagined that the spectral host of the tower was rioting through all its chambers. It soon, however, appeared that these revellers were the squires and horsemen, whom Gryba willingly allowed to enjoy the freshness of life at this hour as well as himself, leaving the castle-watch solely to the fear of the world of spirits. In motley garments, and, like the lark, pouring forth their joy in morning songs, the whole crowd of horse and foot, rushed tumultuously down the mountain-side, and were soon lost and scat-

tered amongst the pine-trees. Thoughtful and weary, the black Castellain gazed for a moment on the youthful revellers and then retired to rest, leaving the draw-bridge down and the gates open for their return.

But the stiller it was below in the abodes of life, the more animated all became in the uninhabited rooms above. Lights passed to and fro, and strange chaunts echoed through the silence. Sometimes bearded forms would peep with sad and mystic features through the windows, now in menace, and now again in invitation. Arnald truly felt that this was not the place for a cheerful son of life and poesy, but not less was he convinced that his employment in the service of Alearda empowered him to brave the collected world of spirits.

With this he passed over the bridge and through the arched gate way, and in a short time his knightly spurs were tinkling on the stairs that led to the mystic hall of spectres.

The doors opened at the lightest touch of the solitary wanderer. Long, and dim, and misty, lay the halls before him, while through them flickered melancholy lights, something like a mourning vapour. When, however, he looked at them more closely, they proved to be figures, and such indeed as he could not again turn his eye from; for notwithstanding their spectral shadowness they appeared most dignified and lofty, though at the same time soft and touching.

Above sate the King, Rodrigo of Spain; he was wild and troubled as the old time in which he had lived, but fearfully young according to the youthful fire, which still sadly glowed upon his lifeless features. Beside him, pale and beautiful as the autumnal moon in night, was his wife, the Queen Egilone, whose love and truth he had betrayed. Mournfully shone her cold features from the long and waving veil; at every sigh a white rose bloomed upon her breast, on which a tear would fall, and the

flowers directly changed to a mild beam of light which vibrated soothingly about the figure of King Rodrigo, till he was almost melted into a gentle smile. But then a fierce woman with wild and streaming hair would look over the shoulder of the murdered hero; this was the wicked Cava, for whom he had burnt with lawless passion, and before whose revenge both himself and the kingdom of the Goths had fallen: at such times the wine in his goblet turned to blood, and, spouting up against him, cast a purple stain upon his forehead, just where the death-wound had smote him, and his mouth was then convulsed with a savage laugh.

Almost overcome with madness, Arnald turned away in trembling.

But his drooping eyes fell upon Alearda's dagger at his side, and courage and confidence again beamed in him.—"I am here in the name of Alearda, my lofty mistress," he exclaimed so loudly

that the whole spectral assembly started, and broke out into discordant murmurings and whispers. Arnald, however, casting off fear, passed by the round table, with clanging walk, and through the long dusky row of chambers to the decisive hall. It was now that he was conscious of some one following his steps, and at times he looked behind him, but without however recognising his pursuer. It was not Gryba—was it the sable Castellain?—Arnald grasped the dagger as firmly as the wounded arm would let him, determined on a brave encounter. But, having approached the curtain, he soon perceived that no earthly weapons were needed here: The unknown remained at the entrance, turned himself round to Arnald, and raised his long menacing finger on high, at the same time shaking his pale brow with mysterious action; it was the dead Crescenzio.

The Minstrel held up Alearda's dag-

ger, so that the weapon glittered cross-wise to the spectre, and said,—"By this holy token I adjure thee to depart and give me room!"—With murmuring cry the shadow melted into air.

Arnald lost no time in entering the hall. Soon the casket-lock gave way to the sharp and tempered steel of the dagger, and Alearda's constellation shone upon the happy Minstrel in all its brilliant jewels. With reverence he drew it forth. He could have kissed the relic, but did not dare, for all that had been touched by Alearda's hand appeared much too high and glorious for his lips.

As he returned with his booty through the halls, some of the spectral images were yet in motion. But they already were beginning, like burnt out lights, to fade at the approach of day; And he retired unassailed through the castle-gate into the pure fragrance of the morning.

CHAPTER XIV.

GRYBA's hunting horn echoed through the forest. Soon after he himself flew along the valley in winged speed, with his motley squadron about him on all sides. None, however, observed the Troubadour who stood behind a clustre of pines, the jewel in his breast, the dagger in his hand, and prepared to resist them to the last.

They all now stopt before the castle, and collected round their knight, who blew a few loud and sustained notes like the commencement of desire's farewell-chaunt, and then sang these words:

" Farewell to the chace o'er hill and dell!
To the jest and the song of mirth, farewell!
The jest and the song in the greenwood bow'r;
For the warders return to their lonely tow'r.
Lightly they sigh
On the turrets high,
For war's wild bliss
And love's gentle kiss,
In dusky night or the sun-lit sky,

When the twilight of morn looks sadly pale,
Forth then we fly o'er the hill and dale;
With hurry as swift as the storm-wind blows,
Far, far into life our wild course goes;
Clatters the brand
'Gainst the mailed hand,
And the windows shake—
While the dead awake
To watch our home with their ghostly band."

And again Gryba blew a few low notes, at which signal the warriors rode slowly by him into the castle. For a moment he lingered alone behind, and, smiling mournfully, greeted the vallies with his hand ere he turned his horse towards the tower.

At this instant it occurred to Arnald that it was an unworthy deed thus to lurk behind the trees, and steal off with the prize, unobserved, like a nightly thief. He therefore quickly forced his way through the branches, the shining jewel in his left hand, the shining dagger in his right, and sang these words:

"Up, Gryba, up! with sword and spear!
A noble foe awaits you here;

He found that hall with terrors rife,
Where move the dead in spectral life;
But through the dark bewildering night
Shone on his sun with warning light.

"Up, Gryba, up! those beams still shed
A summer brilliance o'er my head,
And if beneath your sword I lie
To her in sacrifice I die;
And this green turf, with violets sown,
May serve me for an altar-stone."

Gryba was quickly from his horse and advanced with uplifted sword towards the challenger. In the meantime, Arnald hid the jewel again in his bosom, folded his left arm in the protecting mantle to receive Gryba's assault, and, with the dagger ready for a thrust at his adversary's side, waited for the favourable moment when he should be able to run in upon him.

But Gryba, approaching more closely, dropt his crooked sabre, and looked into Arnald's eye, with all the power of his sweet smile. At length he said; "No, thou knightly Minstrel; the jewel is thine, according to all the laws of earth and heaven. I own that I am conquered."

CHAPTER XVI.

Oh! that I could now invite you to the minstrel-feast which, the three friends rejoicing in the outweathered tempest, held at Balta's little tower. It is true, indeed, that the presence of a stranger amongst them, would break off their mirthful intimacy, but to raise yourself on the wings of fancy, and look invisibly through the roofs and gilded plinths and wainscots—that, dear reader, is still allowed you, and in thus soaring you bear your poet with you.

During the varied conversation, Balta had taken the lyre on his arm, unobserved, and as he now began to sport with its strings the other two were silent in listening attention, whereupon he half sang, half spoke these words:

"The promise of Soleyma's kiss,
A pledged but scarce-expected bliss,
Late drove us to the bloody strife
Of hand to hand and life to life;

And who can wonder, if the brave
O'erlooked the near and hungry grave,
And wrought full many a knightly deed
To snatch the warm delicious mead?
One light, one momentary kiss,
Has more than Heaven's promised bliss."

He changed the measure of his song, and continued thus to a most solemn melody:

" Nobler his love to whom expire
All glowing flames of wild desire,
Before one grateful accent,—one,—
From her he loves, for service done.

" He wishes but to gaze from far
On her, as on night's quiet star;
But sees her not—her holy light
Is in the tear-drop's mirror bright.

" Not sorrow's tears are these that flow—
But sportive as the shower's bow.
That guiding light above him beams
In battle as in minstrel dreams.

" Oh Maraviglia, noble knight,
Thou minstrel of a lady bright,
Hath life for thee no thorny hour?
Doth no care touch thy minstrel bow'r?

" Though in thine eyes and bloodless cheeks
Full many a sorrow palely speaks,

Yet still we feel that grief like this
Divides thee not from heavenly bliss.

" If she forbid not, let us gaze
On her, the subject of thy lays,—
The first of women,—whose light seems
A Heav'n to thee on whom she beams."

" Ah! if I could but see this face!" cried Gryba, and over his lips past a melancholy smile. " But I well know that your christian dames are haughty, and will not descend to a simple Moor."

" Have I then so poorly expressed to you Alearda's image, that you should fancy haughtiness amongst her features? It is true that the innate pride of all chaste women dwells in her exalted mind, and more pre-eminently than I have found it in any others; she is also conscious of the nobility of her descent, but still more conscious of that higher nobility which the christian doctrine gives to all its disciples. But who can affirm that she ever turned away from the least of her people, when any, relying on her gentle rule,

have sought her aid or the comfort of her kind and blissful words?—Whether custom and our Church allow a Moorish knight to appear at the court of my mistress, I do not understand; that must be decided by herself and my instructor the pious Altarbol. Be confident, however, dear friends, and come with me. You, Gryba, have besides to fetch away your noble horse, Pontifer, supposing it is your fate to win him from me in the battle."

"True indeed!—Yet another combat with *you!*"—replied Gryba; and he looked before him with unwonted earnestness.

"Ye noble champions, let not that trouble you," said Balta smiling; "for this time God hath helped us from each other, and it will not come to life and death for Pontifer."

"Balta can sometimes be very thoughtless," exclaimed Gryba in astonishment.

"And Gryba sometimes very orderly and

pensive, like any other rational being,"— replied Balta; and all three began to laugh heartily. In this cheerful mood it was resolved to make the visit to Provence in company, and that very day to take leave of Queen Soleyma. Accordingly, soon after their repast, the three knights mounted three swift and handsome mules, and set out for the castle of the wondrous heathen Princess.

CHAPTER XVII.

SEVERE and earnest, yet at the same time with a singular smile upon her lips, did Soleyma receive the suit of the three friends.

"Each one to his appointed place!" at length she said;—"each one act as he wishes, and must wish. I have already given my opinion upon such subjects long ago; if the beautiful, cold dames of Christendom attract you so magnetically—why, forth, Sir Knights!—upon the sea!—and let your sails swell in the morning-red of to-morrow."

"That we think of doing at all events,"—replied Arnald, with grave courtesy.

"It is like you," she smiled in answer,—"and perhaps too, like the artist Balta. But how you, Gryba, who love the joys

of life, will be at home there amongst all those very wise and very pious personages—that is only known to Allah and his Prophet."

"For you, lady," replied Arnald, "I preserve the reverence which belongs to your sex, the nobility of your rank, and your wondrous beauty. For your idols I know not in myself that which is called respect. Allah and Mahomet, and your other deities whoever they may be, in truth know nothing of the sublime benefits, which may fall to my dear Gryba in the land of Provence."

"Audacious Christian!"

"Not audacious but frank, such as I was brought into the world, of noble birth, and such as my Saviour hath redeemed me with his blood for all eternity."

Upon this Soleyma turned away in anger towards her suite; by chance there was amongst them a powerful heathen priest, who cried out that Maho-

met was blasphemed in these halls and that the offender should be slain. From every side threatening weapons were in motion against Arnald; but he stood there firmly and courageously with his drawn dagger, murmuring to himself; "To die for Alearda seemed too great a bliss for my unworthiness; and shall I now be so exalted as to shed my blood for him who died for Alearda, for me, and for all the world?—Well then—here I am, Oh Lord!"

But this high call passed by him, Gryba and Balta planted themselves before their friend, vowing death and destruction to every one who should dare to advance a single step; and even Soleyma threatened and scolded away the High-Priest and all his followers: then turning to the three knights in calm and smiling majesty, she said:—"Spare for a more pressing occasion your heroism, your pious self-denial, and whatever laudable virtues beside you

thought to exhibit in your useless zeal. You see that no danger threatens you.—Fortune attend your journey. Balta, perhaps, with his wondrous imitations of shrubs and flowers, of men and brutes, may strike root in your Christendom; Gryba,—I hope shortly to see again. As to what concerns you Arnald,—you are a noble knight, a lovely minstrel, an honourable man—but you might have been somewhat wiser—and so good night.'

CHAPTER XVIII.

" Blest be his name, for endless time,
Through all the angel-hosts sublime,
Who gave what only Heaven could give,
And died that sinful man might live.

" Blest be the Virgin evermore
Who Heaven's Son to this life bore,—
Who sits upon the throne of light,
In high and endless glory, bright.

" Blest be the Virgin far and wide,
Where sun and stars in brilliance ride;
E'en we may in her praise rejoice
With faithful heart though feeble voice."

In compliance with an antient custom, the pious Altarbol chaunted this hymn with his monks before a marble image of the Madonna upon the coasts. The people, streaming in from all sides, had decked the revered statue with the loveliest flowers of blooming Provence, and now, in their sunday-garments, with folded

hands and uncovered heads, stood around it in the act of worship. Softly floated the holy tones across the billows that sparkled in the sun; the fullness of the melody and even some single half-distinguished words reached the bark in which our friends were rapidly sailing towards the shore.

"Oh what a wonderful and mysterious chaunt!" cried Balta: "However little intelligible it may be to me, I have yet a foreboding, that therein lies the secret comfort of my whole life. Take my thanks, dear master of Maraviglia, for having brought me to this coast."

And weeping blessedly he sank upon Arnald's breast, who replied with a gentle smile;—"Every pious heathen has felt within him such mysterious echoes, and you certainly above all, my faithful Balta."

In the meantime the bark lightly grounded on the sands of a cove that was circled about with may-green. The three

friends disembarked and pleasantly conversing, wended arm in arm, towards the festival, which had passed from the solemn tone of worship into a merry dance of all the peasantry. . . . . .

At first the Moorish garb of the two strangers excited some astonishment, but it was soon perceived that the Troubadour, Arnald of Maraviglia, walked between them, and all then hastened to meet the guests who had been so long desired. Wine, fruits and flowers were offered to them from every side, and the facility with which Gryba and Balta expressed themselves in the Provençal language, increased the general joy and satisfaction in their appearance.

But Altarbol stood grave and thoughtful at the head of his monks, and for a long time gazed without a word upon the glad multitude, from which Arnald could not yet free himself to greet his friend and instructor as he had wished. At length an earnest sign from Altarbol

called him forth—he stood before him with the tears of joy upon his cheeks; but the Abbot, commanding silence, laid his finger on his lips, and led the Minstrel aside from the rejoicing multitude. Then began between them the following discourse:

"Arnald of Maraviglia, thou hast returned—but HOW returned?"

"As I went forth, my reverend father;—As a true, believing Christian; I have been through many trials, and come back to you, better as I would hope, or at least less feeble."

"Relate to me your trials, dear son."

And Arnald did after the request of his venerable friend, not concealing nor disguising from him the least circumstance, as indeed was his general custom even to strangers, a custom truly honourable, but sometimes perhaps, too inconsiderate. Altarbol showed himself well satisfied, and at length said; "Yes, in truth, you have returned such as you

went and even better. Now may I hope that, after this spiritual battle, no Arnold of Brescia will have any power upon your soul with his splendid errors, and still less a magic-given Crescenzio. But tell me, what is the meaning of these two Moorish knights being with you?"

Upon this point also Arnald gave him ample satisfaction, and concluded by asking if he might present them to Alearda.

"Son!" replied Altarbol,—"what the manners of a court allow or deny I know not; upon this you must consult our lady herself. But that our Lord God suffers his glorious sun to beam even upon thistles, that do I well know; and your Moorish knights look not as weeds, but rather as noble though ungrafted fruit-trees. If, therefore, the Countess may and will, allow it, you may present your two friends before her heavenly face without any farther consideration."

CHAPTER XIX.

A LOUD and angry cry from the near wood called all eyes thither. Swift as an arrow started from its shadows a white horse that bore upon its back a huge and almost gigantic horseman, who in vain strove to tame it by every effort of strength and art, at the same time scolding the animal loudly and violently. Still the horse flew wildly about, and, as he could not altogether have his own way, rose into the air with such various and wonderful plunges, that he seemed almost like the forked lightning, and at last flung his rider far from him upon the green meadow.

"Thunder! This is the first time since my boyhood!" cried the horseman—and remained sitting on the grass in perfect astonishment. By the voice and figure, Arnald recognised his brave

Misura, and ran to him, fearing he might have sustained some injury. The knight, however, was quickly on his feet again, and, seizing Arnald's right hand with a powerful grasp according to his custom, exclaimed; "Welcome to this country; —but tell me, has your horse become quite mad?—I wished to visit you, found you not at home, and thought there could not be a more brotherly service than the taking care of a brave knight's horse in his absence? Who knows thought I, whether the groom may know how to manage him properly, and whether he may not do him some injury at last. I therefore ordered him to be saddled, and exercised him daily. At first, indeed, he was a little spoilt in his paces, often pressed against the thigh, and leant upon the bit, for your squire's hand was somewhat hard; but that soon was got over, and I took a real pleasure in the beast. Now thought I, you should ride him a little along the seacoast; 'twill be

a short journey, and he can bathe himself in the salt-water—and all went well till he came in sight of the meadow, when he grew quite mad, and at length threw me off. If any one were to tell this you would not believe it, nor I either, but now we have seen it, seen it with our own eyes!"

While Arnald listened with a smile to his brave comrade, the Arabian had trotted up to Gryba, with joyful neighing, and caressed him most delightfully, placing his slim neck upon the shoulder of the Moor, while the latter stroaked his mane, and ever said with pleased emotion;—"Ah, Pontifer! my heart-loved Pontifer!"

But Arnald solemnly and gravely interposed saying; "Pardon me, dear friend, we have now made it an affair of honour, and Pontifer as yet is mine."—Gryba bowed his head in melancholy assent, and Arnald led away the horse. He had prepared himself for resistance on the part of the faithful Arabian, but the animal recognized his later master also,

submissively allowed him to mount, and only once again turned back a sorrowful look on Gryba.

Arnald did but gallop the good steed up and down the meadow and prove his mastery over it, when he again dismounted. Tears were in his eyes as he patted the head of the noble horse and said, "No, faithful Pontifer, you again belong to Gryba;—I give you to him again.—It would be a sin to part you from him."

No sooner did the horse feel himself at liberty than he bounded back to Gryba, and again pressed his head caressingly upon his breast.

In the meantime Arnald related to the gallant Misura how it stood between him and the Moorish knight, and concluded by saying; "I ask you, dear comrade, as my umpire, whether this affair is fitly ended, or whether it is requisite that I and Gryba should again fight upon this cause?"

"It would be madness," answered

Misura warmly; "nor would I in any way allow it; on that you may rely with soul and body."

"Well, well," said Arnald, "only be calm. In such affairs one would rather do a great deal too much than a jot too little."

"There you are right again," replied Misura, "and I reckon it a great honour to myself that you took it in your head to ask me the question. Rely, however, on my judgment; the affair is ended in knightly fitness, and, whoever thinks otherwise, will have to speak a little word in private with me."

"It would most likely be a great, instead of a little, word," said Arnald laughing. "But now, Misura, help me to two good horses: I must speedily to Castle Bisiers, and you, perhaps, will accompany me."

"Good," replied Misura. "My servant is holding two excellent steeds in the wood yonder."

Hereupon he went to fetch them, while Gryba, to the delight of all present, bounded over the turf upon his Pontifer, in many and masterly careerings. The slim and lively animal appeared to be made for his slim and lively rider, and each seemed to understand the other.

On a sudden Gryba flung himself out of the saddle, wound his arms about the Minstrel's neck, and, almost weeping, exclaimed: "—Ah! Maraviglia, you are so kind!"—And Pontifer on the other side seemed by his dumb caresses as if he wished to say the same thing to the Troubadour.

CHAPTER XX.

As Arnald and Misura approached the neighbourhood of Castle Bisiers, the latter said; "It rejoices me heartily that I can again be your faithful herald. You will allow me to go on before and announce you?"

"With pleasure, my valiant comrade: but do not blow your hunting-horn quite so violently as you are used to do; the people within else will imagine that war and combat have broken loose from all the corners of the world."

"Humph!" replied Misura;—"'Tis only weak souls can imagine that so easily; there is no fear of it with the brave Viscount and the noble lady Alearda. But in any case rest satisfied; I can also blow right pleasantly and sweetly."

And in truth, he drew from his wood-

man's horn the liveliest and most soothing tones, as he trotted up the hill.

Arnald now in loneness followed him; the brightness of spring was upon his blooming native land, the shepherds piped in glad security, surrounded by the peaceful crowd of their woolly herds, the husbandmen sang as they ploughed and sowed the fields—and upon his breast was the reconquered jewel!—Oh then his soul ascended in still and pious prayer to him who had rained down upon his life such immeasurable blessings.

He had long rode on in these thoughts and was already close to Castle Bisiers, when the lively sound of Misura's horn again echoed towards him, and the faithful herald, springing out of an olive-wood, reported that Alearda and the Viscount were with joy prepared to receive him and hear his tidings.

Surrounded by their court, in the brilliance of noble splendour and silent dignity, stood the Viscount and Alearda

in the great hall of the castle, expecting the knightly Minstrel. The folding doors flew open, and Arnald of Maraviglia entered.

He sank down upon his knee before his mistress, and said, as he held out the star-ornament to her upon a purple velvet cushion;

"Behold, Lady, the jewel which was torn from you and carried into other lands by heathen violence; be graciously pleased to receive it back again from the hands of a Minstrel, who in humbleness would devote to you not only the blossoms of his minstrelsy, but the flower of itself."

Alcarda took the jewel with a friendly inclination, folded it in her girdle, and then replied;

"You have done much, Sir Knight, but not less than I was ever justified in expecting from you."

"And well for the happy hour, in which it was permitted me to grace you with knighthood," added the Viscount, proffering his hand.

Hereupon Arnald rose up, and asked his lady whether it was allowed to him to present the two noble Moors from whom he had gained back the jewel.

Alearda turned with a slight inclination of her beautiful head towards the Viscount, saying; "That can only be decided by my lord and husband."

"Lady," said the Viscount,—"it is no unheard of thing in our Christian lands to allow Moorish knights of noble race and manners to share in our warlike games and festivals. Hospitality is a virtue above all pleasing to the Lord our God, and one which is imparted to every hero of noble birth even from his cradle. Thus too may many a glorious mind be won to the only true belief. If, therefore, you ask me, I say a joyful *yes* to the desire of our valiant friend—supposing, however, that you do not fear to entertain such strange and unusual guests at Castle Bisiers."

"We can have nothing to fear from him who is introduced by a pious Min-

strel," replied Alearda; and bade the Troubadour to ask Gryba and Balta thither. Misura directly undertook the office of invitation, and Arnald was entreated to pass the day at Castle Bisiers.

When towards the evening after much song and music and pleasure the festival died away, he returned still and unperceived to the ruins of Castle Maraviglia. Throughout his whole being thrilled a pure and exceeding joy as he sang to his lyre this song:

"Oh! spotless service of the fair!
When thou art given to valour's pray'er,—
When beauty's grateful accents flow
And lend his cheeks a deeper glow,—
Then feels the Minstrel in his breast
The transports of th' immortal blest,
And sees, though night is on his way,
The morning of the endless day."

It is true that his ancestral ruins towered solemnly towards him in the starlight — true that the little farm-yard received him in its darkling and narrow confines, while he was met by

the faithful greeting of his squire and the joyful welcome of the children and their elders—yet all was insufficient to bring him from the idea that he was not really at home in this place or any where else in the whole world.—" Houseless! homeless!"—he murmured, as he hung the sword and lyre on their accustomed place. Yet in falling off to sleep he sang gently but cheerfully to himself:—

" What skills it where thy couch is made?
In huts or gilded chambers laid?
To thee remains a glorious name,
The service of a glorious dame;
Thine is the heart, the ready hand
To touch the lyre or wield the brand.
No roof is o'er the sky-lark's head
Or o'er the evening songstress spread."

CHAPTER XXI.

A FEW days after this the two Moorish knights were presented to Alearda. How did their noble faces glow in the beams of that mild sun!—while Arnald felt an inward delight and exaltation in the triumph of his lady.

Nor was it long before Gryba's eloquence discovered itself in many profound sayings and pleasant histories. He seemed to have floated over to that quiet world as an eastern child of wonder, on purpose to bring tidings of the lofty trees, the variegated birds, and strange woods of a foreign land—to discourse to them the fragrance of its airs, the beautiful prodigies of its seas and mountains. Not indeed that he spoke much about the east, of which he had only received a transient glimpse in one of his earlier,

travels,—but there was an oriental glow, an oriental fragrance about every image which he evoked by his blooming words, whether its home was in the cloudy west or in the iciest country of the north. All this too was overcast by a thin veil of melancholy and soft desire, so that none of these beams could dazzle, none of these glittering images could awaken terror.

One of the many Troubadours, whom the Viscount's hospitality and love of song had collected at Castle Bisiers, at length involuntarily exclaimed:—"Oh! noble knight, what a glorious poet must you be!—Oh! that you would let us hear a few of your minstrel strains!"

"My good friend," replied Gryba laughing,—"that would be but an indifferent joke for yourself no less than for all this company. You must know that the verses I have sometimes attempted to make, have always been deficient in some necessary excellence, or indeed,—

to express it less delicately,—have been just good for nothing, and have usually leaped, as if mad and blind, over all rules, including even the easiest."

And again streamed forth the flowing tide of his tales and images, without however, disturbing the current of conversation.

Balta on the other hand remained more silent than was usual with him in strange circles. His eyes only expressed in their deep and intelligent beamings the holy delight with which he was penetrated at the sight of Alearda. But often did his looks wander away from her to an image of the Virgin, that the art of a celebrated painter had consecrated to the embellishment of these walls.

It was late in the evening, and the star-lit heaven already shone above them in all its splendour; again the three friends stood together without the castle, for Gryba and Balta particularly desired

during their abode here to share with Arnald the little farm-house by the ruins of Maraviglia.

For a time they walked by each other in quiet meditation, till at last Gryba broke out as if into an inspired hymn upon the glory which he had been that day permitted to behold; and still he continued, now in song, now in speech, without regarding the silence of his companions. As to Arnald, his spirits were inexpressibly elevated, like a lover of the spring, when he sees the herbs and flowers glorifying the entrance of his beloved upon the fields and meadows. Already the Minstrel suspected in Balta the holy bloom which had opened more and more at the aspect of his mistress.

Amidst song and jest they reached the farm-house, and Gryba quickly fell asleep, when Balta rose up from his bed, veiled himself in his mantle, and said to Arnald:—"Do the same,

dear master, and follow me to the ruins of Castle Maraviglia. I have much to inquire of you that can only be spoken in utter solitude."

Arnald did immediately after the desire of his young friend; a few minutes only and they stood alone upon the mossy heap in the dim star-light, high above the sleeping country.

"List, my friend and master," began Balta, "It is not only that the face of the noble Countess has deeply penetrated and inspired my heart, but I must also ask why such excellence may not be painted? Or, again; if the interdiction of the Prophet be just, what then is the art of painting worth?—Is it in this way any thing more than one great and monstrous sin, as if it were an entire life without the idea and the joyful reflex of an heaven?"

"You are perfectly right," said Arnald. "An art, which might not repre-

sent such glory, would be in its very essence a dark detested occupation, fit only for the apostate spirits."

"Yet such is not the art of painting."

"God forbid, dear youth. But your Prophet may be involved in very fearful errors."

"Arnald, you know him not. But no doubt a foreboding horror would seize you, also, if you could fancy to yourself the forms created by impious painters, arising on the day of the recollection of all things—pressing around their master—dumbly and fixedly inquiring for the soul which should animate their earth-made bodies,—while the poor juggler cannot satisfy them and must ever and ever gaze upon their hollow faces!"

He paused in terror, and Arnald too was shaken. At length collecting himself, the latter said;

"Balta, my dear youth! You well know that the words of knowledge have

not been lent to me. But within my breast is a deep and almost certain feeling, that this, as well as all the errors of your Prophet, arises solely from his not being able to believe in the incarnation of the heavenly love."

"What has that to do with painting, dear master?"

"With all that exists it has to do—is its innermost and only real ground, its life, its joy, its kernel. More particularly is that expressed in the wonderful art which we call painting. Look, my friend; what is the object of all Christian painters—the object which, indeed, they never attain, but which they struggle after in many pious and earnest sports of fancy!"

"I have some such feeling," replied Balta, and a holy smile beamed from out his eyes.

"With earthly means,"—continued the Minstrel,—"they would image the Eternal One, who from his mildness and

compassion took upon him our mortality, they would image him, or at least awake in our hearts by their faithful efforts the idea of the incarnate godly love."

"The incarnate godly love!" reiterated Balta; "Some such sounds echoed long ago from your discourse, thrilling through my soul like the solemn swellings of the harp. How was it in that beautiful song which Altarbol sang upon the shore?"

> "Blest be his name to endless time
> Through all the angel-hosts sublime.
> Blest be the Virgin evermore
> Who Heaven's son to this life bore."

"Oh! I do but weakly stammer out these great mysteries, but a mild and blessed twilight is opening in my heart."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE next morning Arnald sought his Altarbol on behalf of Balta, and found him in the cloister-garden, where the venerable old man, with a watering-pot in his hand, was walking up and down amidst the roses, pinks and lilies, aiding by light aspersions the nightly dew of Heaven.

Without breaking off his gentle occupation he listened to the Minstrel's tale with well-pleased smile, and said in answer;

"Another most gracious dispensation of the Lord, in that he hath conducted the young Moor so easily and pleasantly into the right path. Oh yes! This youth, with the mild fire in his dark and intelligent eyes seemed to me even at the first as especially destined for a disciple of the highest truth. Perhaps, he may

one day become a highly favoured light of our Church. And do you still remember what I long ago said to you of Alearda? Here again has she most gloriously shown herself as an angel of God, accomplishing a heavenly mission, though in her still and pious humbleness she has not been conscious of the exalted office. Such is the existence of all pure women. They do much, if they are beautiful and good, from clear reflection, but there is in them besides a heavenly influence, which gives life to the sweetest flowers in unintelligible manner, but one as necessary as it is natural, —almost as the May awakes the blossoms."

Arnald pressed his hand warmly.— "My dear Balta then may visit you?"

"For the present it is better that I should first go to him. It becomes the faithful shepherd to seek after his strayed lambs; and how should the youth at first understand the cheerful stillness of the cloister?"

"His mind, peculiarly alive to inno-

cent cheerfulness, seems most apt to that;"—answered the Troubadour.

"'Tis therefore I act thus," replied Altarbol. There must be no want of fitting preparation with such advanced and highly-gifted spirits; care should be taken that they may not by too much precipitance be robbed of the delight which flows from the first blaze of the pure and perfect truth. For this dear Balta, however, I have no alarms; the struggle that awaits him is not severe.—But, Arnald,—Arnald!—a more fearful combat perhaps awaits a man much nearer to my heart!—And, noble Minstrel, that man art thou!"

"What mean you, Altarbol! You are not again confounding me with the mad Rinaldo of Tagliaduro, or any that are like him?"

"No; that do I not, dear Arnald. I know well how pure and holy is your love for Alearda; but then I also know that in the purest love towards a creature of God, the eternal love to God himself

may be forgotten. Considered by itself, what was there impure in that the Persians rejoiced in the lovely sun, and proclaimed its glory above all created things in the strains of inspiration? But they became the adorers of that sun, and the eternal light was quickly lost to them in the light of earth. Take heed that the same thing do not happen to you, dear Arnald."

"Dear Altarbol, thine earnest and almost fearful admonition leaves my bosom free and joyful. Prayer quickens in my heart and wells cheerfully from my lips, and indeed most fervently on those days, when I have seen Alearda, or might indulge the hope of seeing her."

"But have you, dear son, well considered that important declaration of the Lord?—He, who loves him not above all, is unworthy of him.—For him you should be able to leave every thing; and could you renounce for his sake the still and

pious minstrel service which you devote to Alearda?"

Arnald shrunk together, and looked, pale as death, upon the earth. At length he said;

"Oh father! What a sentence hast thou spoken! Yet if it must be—WELL!—For my sake did he leave all—speak it then freely,—Does he demand this of me?"

"I know not that my son. You must ask the question fairly and piously of yourself; the Omnipotent has a temple in your bosom. If the spirit within confesses that the earthly sun begins to obscure the light of Heaven, then away from your heart with all worldly thoughts, —forth from this country—or at least for a long time far, far from Castle Bisiers, —and bid farewell for ever to the songs that praise the charms and virtues of Alearda."

"And cast into the flames my lovely legends inscribed on vellum solely for her, that she might vouchsafe a smile of

favour on the writing!—And break my harp-strings,—and bury the dagger, which she gave me, in the ruins of Castle Maraviglia!—Oh yes!—All this is not impossible,—I feel it in the anxious trembling which at the thought alone creeps over my whole existence."

"Courage, my son. Was not Abraham compelled to offer up in sacrifice the deepest object of his love? And yet the Lord in his mercy restored it to him in safety and uninjured. Perhaps it may be the same with you. But it may fall out otherwise; bring, therefore, your sacrifice firmly and devotedly, without reserve and without condition. Will my good son do that?"

"I will."

And in the deepest affliction the Minstrel set out for Sir Walter's grave. There in the solitary castle, now almost in ruins, he began the inward strife, full of painful self-denial, that seemed to threaten his very dissolution.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We will not follow our poor friend into the mysteries of his combat, the most fearful he had ever fought, as it was with his own breast, and on one side stood menacing eternity, while on the other were all the joys that he had raised in the season of bloom upon the purest and most elevating feelings. In addition there was this dreadful doubt,—'Do you then really bring your dearest good of earth in fit and perfect renunciation, and is the comfort which will sometimes steal into your heart, only the deception of pride and selfishness, or is it the soothing voice of the Almighty?'—Such hours admit of no witnesses, and just as little of a full detail in words.

Thus much, however, I can say,—and say it with high delight,—that in the first

beams of the following dawn Arnald left Sir Walter's castle, serene and fresh, a youthful glow upon his cheeks, and his eyes sparkling with a holy confidence. Whoever had seen him must have felt all well and stirring about his heart.

The vallies now saluted him with their fragrance; the festal clouds of heaven, drawing themselves together into a purple arch, gave way to the youthful sun; from every tree the nightingales poured forth their music; the springs danced merrily adown the hills, and sported with the motley stones which broke their course as if in playful mockery.

And Arnald sang:

"Whate'er devoted faith to Heaven gives,
Flows, thence returning, in augmented stream:
Now first the son of Maraviglia lives,
And now first sees the star of fortune gleam.
I dar'd to love her in my idle dream,
And still no mirror mock'd the pride of youth;
But now with brilliance, like the day-light's beam,
Within me slowly breaks the morning light of truth.

" From many a cloud of battle hath my star
Of faith arisen, e'en in distance bright,
While all the low'ring storms have pass'd afar
And the dull scales have fall'n from my sight.
A Heaven-devoted Minstrel, from the night
Of error freed, begins my new career;
From all that lives, and moves in Heaven's light,
Arise a thousand thoughts, expanding reason's sphere."

" Amen!" said a pious hermit who was going through the wood in morning prayer. " One may see in your appearance, dear Minstrel, that you have been visited by the comfort and salvation of the Lord. Only preserve these gifts of heaven in an uncorrupted heart, and maintain your life in truth and purity."

" Amen!" said Arnald on his side; and, with humble emotion inclining himself before the friendly monitor, he began to return homewards in silent satisfaction.

It was a calm evening when the moss-

grown walls and turrets of Castle Maraviglia rose upon his sight, and he thus in song addressed them:

"My last last night will toll its hour,
Ere I shall raise yon ruin'd tower,
Where now decay and owlets brood,
And hungry ravens shriek for food;
Still as the evening o'er thee streams,
In glory of its living beams,
Shall crown thee with undying day,
The latest Maraviglia's lay.

"When death was on his fading eye,
Such was my Sire's last prophecy;
Such too the thought that found its rest
So deep and glowing in this breast:
Though time stays not for hate nor love,
But ever flits like clouds above,
Yet ne'er with time shall pass away
The latest Maraviglia's lay."

He now met Altarbol, who was returning from Balta towards his cloister; the Abbot gave his blessing to the Minstrel, gently adding;—"I wish you joy, dear Arnald: I see by your looks that God hath favoured you, and

that you may serve your mistress, and dedicate to her your song.—

Arnald continued his way in silent transport, when Balta came forth from a near olive-wood and, passing by the Minstrel, said; "I will this night hold a converse with myself beneath the free heaven; do not expect me."—With this he pressed Arnald's hand with gentle warmth and was soon lost again in the evening shadow of the trees; but the holy sparkling in his dewy eyes explained, more than a thousand words, the noble and brilliant workings of the soul within.

The little windows of the farmhouse shone out peacefully from amidst the leaves; with inward satisfaction Arnald pursued the windings of the narrow footpath through the rustling grass, that was bent by the dews of evening. Upon entering his room, the friendly Gryba started up with delight from the perusal of a huge volume, upon which he had been anxiously in-

tent, and greeted his returning friend with as much warmth and emotion as if they had been separated for many years. Then taking from him the sword, harp and dagger, he carefully hung them in their accustomed place, and brought the best refreshments without allowing any interference of the servants, when they quickly sate together at the evening meal, undisturbed and without restraint.

"You have missed a visitor,"—said Gryba, amongst other things,—"a most wonderful and merry visitor, whom I I do not rightly understand. In your absence comes a gallant knight, richly attired, upon a noble horse, and, when he hears that you are not at home, declares that he must at all events, wait for you. I thought at first that some affair of honour was in the wind, and cunningly endeavoured to learn the truth. But there was nothing of the sort. On the contrary, he spoke much good of you, though in a motley fashion,

such as;—you were a brave open-hearted comrade,—a droll fellow,—one that over your wine could sing right merry songs,—and at last he praised you beyond all measure, protesting, that you wrote excellent verses, and were made to please in good society.—In this way he chattered for a long time, wearying my brain with his nonsense, that was however very seriously intended. Then he could wait no longer—I suppose I did not particularly delight him,—he was going to Paris, and was called ———"

"Oh! you need not name him to me," interrupted Arnald, laughing; "I recognized him at the first word, and knew it must be Guy of Hauteroche."

"Right," said Gryba—"But only tell me, how could he ever be joined in brotherhood with you? For he gave himself out for such, and he seemed far too brave and open-hearted for a lie."

"Precisely, because he is brave and open-hearted, dearest Gryba. Shall not

our souls expand to such? And is it not in truth a great honour for any real Minstrel, when these knightly dispositions, without any particular predilection for the art, yet in true brotherhood love and recognize our most inward being, the essence with which alone we hope to be able one day to stand before our Creator? Oh, Heaven! I know not whether that holy gift, called poesy, can rest in actual life upon any head to whom this inward nature is a stranger."

"You are right, indeed, my friend; and I am, in truth, no artist. But, leave this. I have already with loving soul plucked from your lips the unspoken words; and now must tell you some thing else, something much lovelier much sublimer.

"I was one day at Castle Bisiers, during your absence, dear master. As I entered, the noble Alearda was showing to her women and to several Troubadours a manuscript which you had

copied and imitated from an antient volume. At first I stood amongst the spectators, and looked over them unperceived. Between the lines were many splendid pictures, but above all was one in which a tall slim knight overcame a dragon by the help of his white and gallant steed. At the sight I thought of my own dear Pontifer and burst out into a cry of approbation. The lady looked round, but when she perceived that it was I who had spoken,—Oh, Arnald! what a severe earnestness spread over her gentle features. She instantly closed the manuscript, and fastened it carefully with the golden clasps, while I, covered with the burning glow of shame, could scarce lift my eyes from earth, though without precisely knowing wherefore. Upon this a smile again rose upon her angel-face, and I so far recovered myself as to say; 'Pardon lady, my intrusion; but I thought that I too might see and enjoy the beautiful

pictures.' — ' You seem to me as a good and friendly child,'—she replied— ' and in truth I did not wish to wound your feelings: But this is the history of Saint George, and I dare open it only to those who are of the same faith with myself.'—' St. George,'—I exclaimed— ' and was he that slim warrior with the snow-white horse upon the ground of azure.' — ' Yes, truly,'—she replied— ' and the ground of azure typifies the heaven-born purity with which St. George began and accomplished all his chivalrous deeds in God. Oh! that it were granted you to have him one day for a patron Saint!—But, wait, Sir Knight; I will fetch beautiful books and pictures that I may show even to you.'—And with infinite goodness she did as she had spoken, and many glorious images and legends passed before my eyes, but in my soul was the holy George, as if he had become its warder. That only, which had reference to him-

self, could dwell with me,—as for instance, the story of Sigurd with the dragon,—and Alearda seemed to observe it with satisfaction.

"Scarcely had I returned hither, when I sought,—I could not do otherwise, dear Arnald,—when I sought for the history of St. George, and indeed found the volume; if, as a Saracen, I have sinned in reading it, your kindness and friendship must pardon me the sin, for I have almost finished the book already. But St. George must be my patron Saint, and in that you and your pious Altarbol must assist me."

"Oh, chaste dames! ye messengers of God!" murmured Arnald, and knelt down in the still ecstacy of grateful prayer.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A VERY serious, but cheerful life began from this day in the neighbourhood of Castle Bisiers. Altarbol appeared at the farm with the first light of morning, when he entered into solemn service with the three friends, praying that they might be strengthened and enlightened; immediately after this he led Balta and Gryba past the ruins of Castle Maraviglia into the lonely and blooming vallies, where he discoursed with them upon the most important questions of time and eternity. In such hours Arnald remained at home, and his spirit poured forth many lovely songs and legends upon the spotless parchment. Late after mid-day Altarbol and his two youths returned, all three, for the most part, with wet eyes, and in deep and

earnest meditation. Then again Gryba and Balta went away to the ruins, each in solitary prayer. When they returned, Altarbol used to request of Arnald a pious song, accompanied by his lyre, and, thus again made friends with earth, they sate down to their cheerful meal. Towards evening the walk of the three knights generally led to Castle Bisiers, for the Viscount had acquired a particular relish for the light tourney-sport of the Saracens, while, on the other hand, Balta and Gryba zealously endeavoured to acquire the perfect use of the lance after the German fashion, man to man with the spear upon the rest. In these violent exercises Arnald often took a part, and always with good credit, but it would also happen that he had to read to his lofty mistress, Alearda, and consult her on his many poetic projects that were yet in contemplation. Balta too was sometimes present, and, as he was now free

from the errors of Mahomet, endeavoured to fix the heavenly features of the Countess in all their character upon polished wood or the finest linen. But besides this, in his still and lonely hours, he painted another female with the child upon her arm, in which the glory of the Mother of God was strikingly revealed; often would he say to Arnald;—"That is she who has ever floated before me; how she is to be rightly served, I rather feel than know, but I hope soon to learn it; then I may first thank Alearda, who, with her chaste beauty, has been my guide to this eternal mistress and to that blessed light of heaven, in which Madonna is enthroned."

Once when they were speaking at the farm of the near feast of baptism, Gryba asked whether it would not be contrary to the customs of Christian knighthood if he still wore his black Moorish habits and his well-used sabre.—

"I would rather see you in other garments," replied Altarbol,—"and above all if they were azure, for your whole being is light and clear as the cloudless firmament."—Gryba gratefully inclined upon his teacher's hand, and said;—"Now then I know why the azure ground of that image smiled upon me with such promise. Be it according to your will, dear Sir and father."—"But your tried sabre you may always keep," continued Altarbol; "and hallow it by many a pious deed of heroism, although it seems to me of peculiarly good import that Balta, even when amongst the Moors, carried at his side a knightly sword formed after the Christian fashion."—"Oh yes," said the frank-hearted Gryba; "in truth Balta was always of more value than myself, and you will see that he will now go much farther in all piety and virtue,—but yet I hope that I shall not altogether remain behind hand."—"God maintain thee in

thy angel-humbleness," murmured Altarbol, almost inaudibly to himself, as he laid his hand upon the young man's head in blessing. After a time, Balta said, with his accustomed smile of intelligence,—"Something else is on our Gryba's heart, which he will not trust himself to speak, and I must therefore be his interpreter. You see the beautiful polished symbols on his breast. Must he lay aside these too with his black Moorish garments?" "I will do it willingly," interrupted Gryba;—"Let it be."—"What then is the meaning of these tokens, dear son?" asked Altarbol.—"Ah! my father," replied Gryba, "these are Arabian characters, and were thus given to me by degrees; one by a prince, another by a hero, a third by an assembly of our people,—and all in recollection of some gallant warfare, in which I was present, and not without glory. See; this commemorates the battle of the landing, wherein

our brave Arnald was almost slain."—"But is there not amongst them the name of Mahomet or of any other idol?"—"No, dear father; only the towns and countries, where we fought, are nominated."—"Then, my son, continue to bear those emblems, in the name of God!"—"Ah!" cried the Moor,—"It was kind in you, dear Balta, to explain this business!"—and, full of childish joy, he embraced his companion.

CHAPTER IX.

THE solemn day was come, on which the two young Saracens were to receive the waters of the holy baptism. Multitudes of people, in festal habits, were collected about the farm to accompany the new votaries of faith; the crowd had wreathed the falling walls and turrets of Castle Maraviglia with bands and garlands, so that the spring-shine of youth seemed to rest again upon the mouldering deserted ruins.

Amidst pious chaunts they took the way to Castle Bisiers. From its walls also waved colours and flower-wreaths far out upon the country, that now beamed with summer, while the echo of trumpets, flutes, and horns, mingled in alternate melody with the chaunt of the procession.

In this way they reached the castle

chapel, where Alcarda, in white garments, like to an angel of light, already waited by the font for her two godsons, for she and Arnald, at the request of both the youths, had undertaken to stand for them in their baptism. Balta and Gryba had, indeed, expected the Viscount for a godfather, but the strict customs of the Church in that period would not allow married people to enter into such a spiritual relationship; on the contrary, such a bond destroyed the possibility of a worldly union, as if between brother and sister.

But, like the priest of all earthly glory, stood the Viscount by their side in princely armour, that after the spiritual confirmation he might impart to the new convertites the highest of terrestial honours,—the honours of Christian knighthood.

Clear and bright as the summer-day itself, shone Gryba in his sky-blue vestments, as Altarbol had desired. Upon

his breast were fastened the emblems of honour with golden embroidery. On the other hand the still Balta was attired in dark green and silver, like the woods in moonlight. The dark locks of either youth, now for the first time freed from the pressure of the turban, flowed about them in graceful splendour.

Altarbol appeared. In compliance with the wish of the two neophytes he baptized both at the same time, as is the custom with twins, naming Gryba, —George, after his elected saint; and Balta,—Sebastian, after that hero of the faith whom he loved and reverenced above all others.

George and Sebastian now approached the princely Viscount, who solemnly imparted to them the knightly dub as Christian champions. Arnald girded on their swords; and Misura, their golden spurs.

Then followed a still and earnest love-feast amongst the upper circle about the

lofty mistress, where each spoke more with thoughts than words, and yet was understood by the rest in a strange and almost angelic manner. Alearda herself scarce breathed a syllable, but her holy smile beamed into all hearts, awaking there silent hymns to the praise of Heaven.

When the feast was over George and Sebastian bent before the Countess and her warlike husband, requesting permission to go forth into the world, that they might do something glorious and salutary for the Christian faith.

Alearda, gently assenting, bowed her lovely head, and the Viscount answered; —"God knows how much I should like to keep you still, ye noble heroes, ye new-born jewels of our Christendom. But, in truth, life is no journey of pleasure, but a warfare and a pilgrimage. If, however, it is not against your purpose, let me know the aim of either's enterprize, that at least I may truly follow you in my thoughts."

" I,"—replied Sebastian,—" am attracted to the holy grave. There I expect that the service, which I have vowed to the Mother of God, will be made manifest unto me; in my life I yet hope to do many noble deeds for the honour of oppressed women, and unarmed pilgrims."

" And I,"—said George,—" think of passing into Africa. I know not precisely what attracts me to its sunny coasts, but I feel that it must be something, which will tend to the glory of my Saviour and the profit of my brothers in the faith."

" Go forth with God !"—said Alearda, and signed the parting warriors with the sign of the holy cross."

" Go forth with God !" re-echoed the Viscount, as full of inward and earnest love he prest the two youths to his noble heart.

And they went out silently, accompanied by Arnald and Altarbol.

CHAPTER XXVI.

On the sea-shore where the marble image of the holy Virgin towers in all its glory, and where Arnald had landed with his then Mahometan friends, he now took leave of those same friends, in the faith of Christ, while Altarbol laid his hand upon their heads in blessing.

Many a bitter pang thrilled through each bosom, and in their eyes stood the bright and pearly drops.

George and Sebastian entreated Arnald to accompany their departure with a song, when their ships, which were lying close upon the shore, should begin to bear them off, the one southwards the other to the east.—"If indeed,"—George added,—"your true heart is not too sorrowful for singing, for I feel in myself, how hard it is for you to part with us, dear Knight and Minstrel."

The tears fell from Arnald's eyes unceasingly,—" Ah!" he sighed,—" Who would not weep to part from you and from Sebastian? And in this last moment too you appear so immeasurably dear and faithful!—the one with his blooming, hearted words,—the other with his still and sensefull looks. Shall we ever again see each other in this world, with the eyes of the body?"

" That,"—said Sebastian,—" is a doubtful, nay almost improbable event."

" I believe it, however,"—added the Prior confidently.—" Whether soon or late, the foreboding spirit says not, as being a thing which has nothing to do with temporal calculations. But that we three shall yet again stand about Arnald, and almost as now, with him between us on the grass—that, dear sirs and friends, I seem to know with the most perfect certainty."

" Farewell then!"—cried George and Sebastian. With earnest embrace they bent towards the Troubadour and tried

to smile, but the hot tears gushed from out their eyes and mingled upon Arnald's cheeks.

And now sounded from both ships the signal for departure, and the two young knights hastened aboard, when the sails began to swell, and George and Sebastian were seen upon either deck signing farewell greetings, now to each other and now to their friends that remained upon the shore. Then Arnald thought of their request, and, while he struck his lyre, sang this song after them on the dark-blue waters:

"In Heaven's cause, with Heaven's brand,
Sebastian, to the Holy Land!
There burst the chains which tyrants wind
About the body as the mind;
Thy valour be dear woman's stay,
Thy sword protect the pilgrim's way.
In colours, then, that ne'er can die,
Shall float the Virgin to thine eye,
The knight's, the painter's panoply.

"In Heaven's cause, to Afric's strand!
For time turns fast his dropping sand;

Where'er thy wand'ring course may be
A smiling angel is with thee,
Shall open many a friendly door
In pathless wild or lonely shore.
Before thy smile of warmest spring
The storm shall gently droop his wing;
And many a lost one shalt thou gain,
'Midst pleasure's dance and minstrel's strain,
To Christ, from error's dark domain.

"In Heaven's cause, with lute in hand,
I linger on my native land;
There duty bids me waken still
The poet's song, the painter's skill,
In one delicious minstrel-dream,
Beneath high beauty's summer beam.
Brave friends, I know that you will bring
Full many a tale for me to sing;
'Till then, farewell, to aching sight—
Your course be as yon billows bright,
That rise, and move, and die in light."

Third Book.

Minstrel-Love.

CHAPTER I.

The winter had set in, and lay upon the land more deeply and gloomily than it was used to do in the mild Provence. It filled the vallies with grey clouds, and roared through the woods with rainy tempests.

Arnald, seated by the warm blaze of the fire, composed much and with peculiar pleasure, in his little chamber. Still the cold and darkness did not hinder him from frequent visits to Castle Bisiers; here he had not only to read to Alearda, but the Viscount, kept from his wood-sports by the rough weather, would often call him to his room to converse upon the heroes of other times, particu-

larly upon the military art of the Greeks and Romans, and how far it might be applied to the then times of chivalry. In his boyish days, and even in his growing youth, Arnald had learnt much of those things from Sir Walter of Vergi, who was no less versed in the theory, than in the practice of war, and with loving care had endeavoured to make his ardent foster-son like himself; in this, indeed, he had only partially succeeded, but still it exerted a beneficial influence upon the whole of Arnald's life and actions, as a knight and as a minstrel.

One day the General and the Troubadour agitated this question, whether it was possible to use the infantry with decisive effect in close masses, according to the fashion of the old Greeks and Romans; so earnest were they upon the question, that after the evening meal the Viscount requested his friend to accompany him again to his chamber, that they

might get a clear insight into the business that very hour, if possible.

Many an old book was opened by the inquiring knights; many an antient battle between Greeks and Persians, between Gauls and Romans, was vividly fought over again in imagination: but however much the Viscount was inclined to the revival of that long-disused service, still Arnald missed in their warfare the genuine cavalry, as it was to be found in their days of knighthood. Before such a weapon, he maintained, the foot of the antients must have fallen, or at least, would never have got those decided laurels, with which they now prank it for all ages.—"What," he exclaimed, "could the naked Persians, with their shouts and their galloping backwards and forwards, and their weak flights of arrows, achieve against well-armed men, who boldly held together? But the lance in the rest,—and upon them! in the swift firm-closed charge of horse!—We should then have

seen another game."—"And the Roman knights at Pharsalia?" asked the Viscount. —"As if it were not written,"—cried Arnald,—"that they had become weaklings, anxious to save their smooth faces, and trembling at the bearded aspects of the German infantry opposed to them?" —"Then we knights are now as ever the masters in the field," said the Viscount, with animated delight.—"Certainly," replied Arnald,—"provided only that the field is not full of stakes and hedges, and that we are properly disposed, which will always be the case as long as we have the honour of fighting under your direction."—"God grant that I may yet often approve it in company with you, my brave Minstrel!" exclaimed the Viscount, as he grasped his hand. With glance of fire gazed the heroes on each other, in the reflection of the noble deeds, which passed over their aspiring fancies.

At this instant a screech-owl, beaten about by the storms, flapped her wing

so rudely against the window, that it flew open, and for a moment the burning eyes of the bewildered creature stared wildly into the chamber. In the next it turned away with a melancholy cry.—"That imports war," said the Viscount, and looked joyfully upon his sword. But Arnald sighed deeply as he answered;—"For you, perhaps,—certainly not for me. It seemed as if all my hopes fell with a crash together, while a mournful death-song floated over them. Be sure, an early death awaits me—a death of sickness,—and I shall never again march to the battle under your victorious banner."

"Arnald! my warlike Arnald! How is it that such melancholy words flow from your lips on the sudden?"

"I know not, my noble General; but they are spoken, and assuredly mean much. Come then what may come!—'Tis God disposes it.—For the present, dear Sir, good night; I must hasten to

reach my cottage, if I would rest before the morning twilight."

"You must stay with me to-night at the castle, dear Arnald. I cannot suffer you to go out in this wild tempest."

With this he called a page, and bade him light the Minstrel to a chamber.

The child, bearing a wax-light in his hand, walked through the arched passages and up the broad steps before the Troubadour; vividly flashed across his mind the evening, when he first had been summoned to Alearda, and all had chanced to him so strangely and mysteriously in Castle Bisiers.

The page also seemed to be thinking of the wonders which were told of this antient building. At every turn of the stairs and passages he held out the light afar, and yet again drew it back from the dark corners and niches in the walls, as if he feared to waken the horror that might be lurking there.

In this way they reached a large hall,

from which many doors led into the near apartments. Scarcely had the child entered, than he let fall the torch in horror; it expired upon the stone pavement, and he fled with a cry of agony. . . . . .

Arnald afterwards confessed to his friends, that his first impulse was to follow the flying page.—What, indeed, is more fearful than the shriek of terror at some horrid object while it is as yet unknown to us! Add to this, moreover, the wild beating of the storm against the windows, and the pale twilight beams, half shown, half denied by a few solitary stars as they were revealed or hidden by the swift and flying clouds. But, uttering the name of his mistress and of his race, the Minstrel calmly advanced; or only blushed to think Sir Walter of Vergi might learn that his pupil had thought of flight but for a single moment.

A faint glimmer streamed from the crevices of a neighbouring door. As

Arnald cautiously approached, he was sensible that something waved before it, and peeped and rustled at the lock. From within were heard the crying of a child, and the fearful whisperings of female voices. A moment's reflection told him that this was the chamber of the little Countess Bertha; anxious lest any fright or danger should threaten the tender blossom, he advanced quickly and softly toward the figure, and asked—"Who wants anything here?"

"I!"—roared a voice like the pealing of thunder, and the storm howled more fearfully without, and from the broken clouds the moon looked broad and bloody through the windows.

Oh! upon what did it then shine!

Wrapt in the dark heavy vestments of a monk, with corse-like and threatening features, strode the castle-spirit by Arnald, and muttered as he sank through the stone in the centre of the hall;—"Thou!

Ask me not who I am a second time! 'Twould be thy death!"

The spectre vanished; the night grew calmer; nothing was heard except the moaning of the child, and the more bitter lamenting of the women from the chamber. Chilled with horror, and struck by a sad foreboding, Arnald sought and found one of the near rooms set apart for guests: without undressing he sank upon the bed, but that which cradled him in soothing unconsciousness, might rather be called a swoon than a slumber.

CHAPTER II.

THE next morning broke dully, and cloudily, and sadly;—sadly too for the inhabitants of Castle Bisiers, for during the night the little Countess Bertha had been attacked in a surprising way by a violent fever, which increased with every hour. The skilful Altarbol was quickly sent for, but he laboured in vain to stem the evil.

Alearda sate by the bed-side with a smile of sorrow, her beautiful hands folded together in holy patience. Arnald could have expired with grief before her, and particularly when once a gleam of hope passed over her face, for ah!—he had seen at the child's door the death-announcing spirit in his shape of evil.

The women, too, seemed aware of

what had raged so fearfully in the hall that night; even in Alearda's heart was a foreboding of the truth, but she feared to ask, and the women feared to speak, unasked.

Thus, amidst zealous prayer and anxious nursing of the child, had the evening again set in. Bertha lay in the burning sleep of fever; all stood or sate around in silence—Alearda and her women with eyes worn out by weeping,—the men in deep emotion and void of hope.

Then arose the female superintendent of the household, a venerable widow, who was never seen otherwise than in mourning weeds, and began to speak thus in murmured tones;

"At the remotest point of Brittany is a rock that stands far out into the sea; scarcely at the time of ebb is it to be ascended, and then with indescribable toil and danger; many pilgrims have perished there. On the top of this rock is a holy image,—I know not to which of the hea-

venly inhabitants it is dedicated—but whosoever has vowed a pilgrimage thither wards off all the consequences of evil prophecy and threatening apparitions. He, who accomplishes it and prays devoutly on the summit, destroys the evil of the prophecy altogether, and converts it to a blessing. My departed husband told me this when dying, and to-day I tell it after him for the first time. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear; often when the need is greatest, the help is nearest."

In perfect confidence, and as if raised from her grief on rescuing wings, smiled Alearda upon the Minstrel, who glowing with delight and vigour, rose up, held forth his right hand to heaven in adjuration, and said gently and in solemn tones;

"By this I vow myself a pilgrim to the rock on the coast of Brittany: with God's blessing I purpose to enter upon my course to-morrow, at the earliest hour, and"—he added, kneeling to the Prior,

—" bless me for this travel, dearest Altarbol."

With overflowing eyes the Abbot did according to the desire of his young friend. The Viscount joyfully took Maraviglia to his arms, while Alearda inclined her head to him in token of gratitude, but as if it could not have been otherwise; at this confidence Arnald's heart swelled with delight, and a burning desire for every difficulty and danger.

The widow then pointed gravely to the child, from whose cheeks the fever-glow had begun to vanish at the moment of the uttered oath, so that now it lay there gently breathing in a light refreshing slumber.

All prayed around in silence.

CHAPTER III.

The morning had dawned, and Arnald had taken leave of his mistress and the Viscount by the bed of the little one, who still continued in a soft refreshing slumber. Upon Altarbol's assurance that there was nothing now to be feared for the child, and with full reliance upon the Minstrel's truth and constancy in this enterprise, Alearda had gone to rest.

In the first light of the red, wintry sun, and in the grey mist, stood Arnald at the gate of Castle Bisiers, fully attired as a pilgrim, and ready for his journey. Then came another pilgrim from the castle, of huge and vigorous stature, who earnestly signed to the Minstrel that he should stop and wait for him. An idea of the castle-spirit thrilled through Arnald's breast with the shiverings of

the mysterious morning-hour, but as the unknown approached, he proved a dear friend; it was Misura, who had heard of Arnald's journey, and was positively resolved to accompany him on his dangerous and toilsome wandering.

"Thou kind, friendly companion!" said Arnald, deeply moved;—"But may it not prejudice my vow?"

"Only ask him then," replied Misura, pointing to Altarbol, who at the moment came through the archway to bless his dear Maraviglia once again, and dismiss him with the peace of Heaven.

In truth Misura had already spoken of his project to the Abbot, who solemnly gave his friend permission to be accompanied by his brave associate.

"But my dear spiritual father," said Misura,—"I have yet another question on my heart. Is it God's will that we should set out in the wild winter, and perhaps break our necks on a cliff of Brittany? We can as well pray here as there, since the Lord is every where."

"If it seem doubtful to you, dear son, then do not go," answered Altarbol. "You would do a blind, and in that a sinful act."

"Well, well!" muttered Misura;—"May one not even ask a question? You gentlemen are so prodigiously quick with yes or no."

"In that *yes* or *no*," said Altarbol, "lies salvation for time and for eternity. To the right or left!—We ever stand upon the crossway, and the middle path is nothing more than the abyss itself."

"I would not willingly go into that," replied Misura angrily. "I will go to the right!—Do you mark me?—To the right, with my brave Arnald; but you might beforehand make it a little plain why one goes on such pilgrimages."

"My son," said Altarbol,—"faith can remove mountains, but its practice always fixes on some part of external circumstance. How it is to be effected, on that lies the veil, which every position of earthly things forms variously and

wonderfully. It may be that the true prayer of Arnald would as well secure the child's recovery at Castle Bisiers, as elsewhere, but the words of promise have been spoken; Arnald believes in them—Alearda and the Viscount believe in them,—perhaps too the child, in the partial consciousness of dreams. Briefly, friend, the trial is visibly there, and nowhere else:—who in such a case would palter with doubts and sophistry."

Misura inclined his head in silence, and strode hastily after the Minstrel, who was already upon his solemn travel.

CHAPTER IV.

For many days it seemed as if the north wind would stop the progress of the pilgrims, so furiously it raged about them, dashing the rain and hail against their faces; and even the snow arose in whirlwinds, the farther their way was removed from the milder Provence. Often would Arnald, and sometimes even the strong Misura, sink exhausted before it on the earth.

On such occasions the Troubadour would exclaim with a smile;—"Cheer up! What would be the merit of pilgrimage, if it resembled a walk of pleasure?"

"We need have no alarms on that score here," would Misura frequently reply. "A mighty change must take place before it comes to that, and there seem no symptoms of it just at present. But Arnald, my dear brave Arnald, me-

thinks you should allow yourself rest and repose for one day and night at least. Why did you hurry so from the cloister, yesterday, where they received us right heartily and hospitably. The pious monks there must have understood the matter, and they believed that a short abode amongst them during this dreadful storm, and in your exhausted state, would by no means prejudice the holy business in which we were concerned."

"Misura!" replied Arnald, and leant in still weariness upon his pilgrim-staff; "Misura! I confess it freely, I yesterday in going to rest entertained similar thoughts with yourself and the good brothers of the cloister. But then I saw in a dream how the little Bertha began again to sicken, and how Alearda was awakened—I heard the old widow speak in consolation;—'Patience! Our pilgrim is only stopped for a time in his journey by exhaustion.'—And Alearda replied with

heavenly mildness;—'I will have patience; in truth the brave faithful knight must almost perish in this tempest; but oh! my poor child!'—And before her trickling tears, dream and sleep and weariness departed from me. Forward! my dearest Misura,—forward!"

He shouted in the joyful tones that were wont to animate his war-cry; Misura supported him by the arm, and forth they hurried into the gloomy night, however wild the storm, however trackless the snowy wood that surrounded them with its uncertain shapes of trees and mountains.

It was now deep midnight. A distant light amongst the frosted boughs had often allured the wanderers to the edge of a slippery precipice; they resolved, therefore to go no farther, and sank down in weariness upon a fallen tree.

While Misura endeavoured to raise a light and flame from some collected brush-

wood, Arnald sang these words in a subdued tone:

"How sad and cold the earthly night!
How clear the heaven's morning light!
Down with ye, cares!—The warder wakes!
Hope smiles, as day from darkness breaks;
Soon shall we meet in realms above,
Before the throne of endless love."

"You may wait long for that," yelled a wild voice through the bushes, and suddenly there stood before Arnald a tall, dark man, who poising his spear exclaimed; "Fellows, what business have ye in my precincts? And who has given you leave to frighten away the game with your dull melancholy sing-song?"

"Keep three steps off!" said Arnald; "I should be lothe to do you any harm in the journey which I have now to accomplish."

"Hoho!" laughed the wild stranger; "such things we can easily decline."—Thereat he blew his horn, and six or seven hunters rushed in from all sides

with drawn wood-knives and ready cross-bows.

Upon this all the wrath of the old Maraviglia again awoke in Arnald's gallant breast.—"Down with your infamous advantages!" he cried;—and struck the hunting spear with his staff, so that the light weapon broke into many pieces. The huntsmen flew away with execrations.

But now Misura came up with a blazing root in either hand, and beat them about his enemies heads till they were laid prostrate on the earth; two of them would have risen, but he dashed their brows against each other till they became senseless. He then placed his foot upon the breast of another that began to move, and said,—"Lie still, scoundrel, or I trample on you, and all the bones in your body will fall asunder." The conquered sighed and was silent.

—He only, who seemed to be the leader, had escaped from the tumult by a prudent retreat, and stood upright at a distance,

though disarmed by Arnald's angry blow, Misura addressed him thus;

"I am sorry from my soul that, according to all probability, you are a knight, and perhaps of a noble and distinguished race. You begin strife, and when the storm is up, you remove ten paces off upon the sudden."

"I am unarmed," said the stranger, with sullen defiance.

"Ah!" replied Misura, "In need and anger any thing will serve the real soldier for a weapon. I and my brave friend have shown you that already."

"It beseems me not," said the stranger, "to go about fighting with obscure rabble, of any kind."

"Obscure rabble! Of any kind!" cried Misura, indignantly. "Are you then acquainted with us, my over-noble Sir? You should know,——"

"That you will on no account name our names to him," interrupted Arnald; "Our pious occupation has nothing to do with such worldly matters."

Misura stopt directly in his intended speech; but he breathed strongly upon a fire-brand, till it again sent forth a flame, and holding its brightness before Arnald, said, "Look, my strange Bramarbas! Does that show like obscure rabble of any kind! Why, the lyre which peeps out from the pilgrim-cloak, may be sufficient to bring you into no little difficulty. How, if songs should echo from it of your nightly robberies? Songs, which in a short time would be sung all over France, through Spain and Germany, even to the land of the east?"

"Be not concerned," said Arnald to his opponent. "My present earnest path, allows no songs, of which your actions could be the subject."

But the stranger did not seem to trust entirely to this, for in those song-loving times it was bad to have a minstrel for an adversary. Princes, and knights, and people, and, above all, noble women, always sided with the injured Troubadour, and the general love for minstrelsy

gave wings to every beautiful legend, up the land and down the land."

"Forgive my hastiness,"—said the strange knight after some hesitation,—"and let us be good friends. I am the Marquis Raymond, the lord of the castle yonder, which is glittering through the branches with its lights, and I invite you thither to partake of my hospitality."

"We don't come into your castle," replied Misura, shaking his head.—"If, however, you will go with us to its neighbourhood and refresh us with food and wine,—but very good wine, I tell you that,—why, the peace shall be wholly and perfectly concluded."

The strange treaty was confirmed, and though at first Arnald showed some disatisfaction with it, he yet, in the end, suffered himself to be overruled, as the Marquis pretended to be so full of shame and penitence. The huntsmen meanwhile, had recovered, and all set out for the castle.

CHAPTER V.

Over slippery planks that like thin threads united the sides of gaping abysses, between narrow mountain-walls, and over piles of jagged rocks, they at length arrived before the castle of the Marquis. On the way, Misura had taken all possible precautions not to be betrayed by the knavish huntsmen and their more knavish master. At every doubtful turning of the road, they were all compelled to go first, and when, notwithstanding this, any shadow of danger remained, he drew forth a short keen Provencal sword which he carried under his pilgrim-garb, and made it glitter through the night towards his dangerous guides. But they soon had learnt a profound respect for him, and at a sign obeyed all his wishes.

Arrived before the castle, Raymond

again pressed the pilgrims to enter, but Misura replied; "With walls and bolts I don't know how to manage; with men, so much the better. We stay without here."

Stamping and murmuring, the Marquis entered into the castle and violently closed the folding-doors behind himself and his companions. The large, illuminated windows of a splendid hall flung their light down upon the pilgrims, showing to them a near chapel, under the shelter of which they withdrew themselves from the continuing tempest.

In a short time people came out from the castle, through a little gate, and brought wine and food which they offered to the wanderers with mocking laughter, but Misura exclaimed;—"Taste first yourselves!"—and when they sought in a confused way to dispense with this, he quickly seized one of them by the neck, and forced a great portion of the wine into his mouth.—"Now, manikin,

stay and sit with us; we must first see how it agrees with you."—No one dared to object; the others silently departed, and he, who had drank of it, fell immediately into a deep slumber.—" A very useful sleeping potion," laughed Misura indignantly; " Who knows what they might have done with us?"

But Arnald tuned his lyre, hurried over the strings with angry vehemence, and directed this song towards the glittering windows of the castle:

" 'Tis the will of your heart—
'Tis the deed of your hand,—
To stamp our free limbs
With the dungeon's foul brand.
Our will is to save
From despair's endless wave
From eternity's grave,

" Brief the journey of life,
And the death-sea is near,
Rolling darkly its waves
Unfathom'd by fear.
Turn to *him* then again,
Who looked not in vain
On mortality's pain.

" In the voice of my song
Is a sad warning cry;
Up! up to the toil
Ere the sun-light shall die:
For long is the way,
And short is the day,
And life is time's prey.

" But to fall like a star
From the regions of light
To the pit where sin groans
Through eternity's night,
Where the devilish rout
In flames whirl about
With maddening shout.—

" Are the pleasures of life
Worth an anguish like this?
Are beauty and wine
Worth eternity's bliss?
Oh turn while you may
While the glory of day
Yet shines on your way,

" For evil, the realms
Of evil are rife;—
The flames, that die not,
For the evils of life.
On the dark brink you wave—
Hope, yet lives to save!
Up! up! from the grave."

At these sounds of fearful warning,

Misura visibly trembled, but within the Castle they by no means seemed to have wrought a similar effect. During the song a woman of great beauty but of sharp features and wildly-glowing cheeks, had looked through the casement, which she now burst open, so that her raven locks streamed to the night-storm, and she cried out to them with a mocking courtesy;

"Thanks for your penitential psalm. I will sing you something better in return."

With this she seated herself, and, touching a harp with singular grace and power, she sang to it a love-song full of warmth and desire which Arnald had composed in his younger days. By her side appeared the Marquis Raymond in splendid attire, three gold chains with medals about his neck, and in his hand a sparkling silver goblet. He leant against the lady's chair and drank to her in the pauses of the song, when she too

sipped the wine, dexterously touching the harp with a fascinating motion of her beautiful arms and hands. At this time the blaze of a fire in the background streamed upon the two figures with a ruddy glare, so that in the frame of the lofty gothic casement, they looked like a mysterious picture, equally illumined by earthly splendour and the fearful gleamings of the world without us.

Arnald hid his face in both hands, and said gently to Misura; "Could I ever in my wildest days have composed a song adapted to such hellish revelry?—Never,—never could my minstrel hours have been so mad and so impure."

"Be contented," replied Misura. "In this world the gifts of Heaven are variously abused. Witches and other friends of magic can draw a poison from the most harmless flowers."

The fearful beauty had now ended her song, and called down to them;—"See, you wretched chirper of psalms,

how little you understand your business, and how different you are from the noble Master Arnald of Maraviglia! It is he who composed the words which I have just been singing to you."

Arnald turned away from her and knelt before an image of Christ in the chapel, but Misura could no longer restrain his indignation: he cried out with a loud voice to the fair scoffer, who had risen from her seat and wound her arms about Raymond's neck:

"He, now praying to our Saviour in the chapel,—he is the celebrated Master Arnald of Maraviglia!—and he is come to bring you weal or woe, according as you may choose. But choose quickly; for the time of penitence is short, and your sinful reckoning is long."

Pale as death sank the woman into Raymond's arms,—pale as death tottered Raymond with her from the window.

Arnald and Misura went on silently through the nighted forest.

CHAPTER VI.

As the morning shone through the branches, Misura said; "Are you angry with me, dear Troubadour, that I transgressed your order, and called you by your name before that wicked rabble?"

"At first I was alarmed, and almost angry, at your bringing forward my minstrel fame, which is altogether at variance with our present purpose. But the way, in which you continued, informed me better. I saw well, that the saving and avenging will of God had loosened your tongue, and, let what will hereafter happen, it is well already."

To this Misura said; "You read me through and through. It was with me precisely as you now in few words describe it. The words flowed from my

lips without my calling for them, but I felt that such was the will of God."

During this conversation they had got beyond the wood. Before them lay a wide extent of country that glittered in the hoar-frost and morning brilliance. Weary from the events of the night, they looked upon the many castles and villages around, inquiring with their eyes whether any hospitable and friendly reception was to be found in the neighbourhood.

At this instant there rode by a young man in a simple hunting-habit; he greeted them kindly and said;

"My good, weary pilgrims, if you like to put up with family fare in a small and somewhat ruined habitation, I will with pleasure take you to my home, where, since the death of our parents, I have lived with my two sisters. I am a nobleman, by name Godfrey, from the race of Montalban, a race that

is not altogether inglorious; But fortune has taken much of its former splendour from the branch to which I belong."

Arnald felt indescribably moved by these simple words.—Here also was an impoverished, but not the less noble scion of an antient house.—With friendly thanks the Minstrel proffered to him his hand, and Godfrey did not desist from his entreaties, till Arnald had placed himself in the saddle of his horse, whereupon he ran on before to announce to his sisters the nearness of his guests.

Already from a distance they perceived a joyful commotion in the little castle; as they approached more closely, it was delightful to see how the crackling fire shone through the transparent windows, filling the hall with light and gentle warmth. At the door Godfrey came out to meet them, and led them in with respect, having first given the horse to the care of an old servant,

whom he kindly addressed, saying; "You must take care of my dapple steed to day for me, good Robert; you see I have something better to attend to."—The old man nodded his head with great satisfaction. It was easy to see that he rejoiced in having any thing to do for his young master.

Within stood one of the sisters cooking at the hearth; the other prepared the pillows of two couches, which had been placed before the fire. Both maidens belonged to those delicate slim forms, which are so frequently met with amongst the noble ladies of the old Frankish race. Poverty had not been able to derogate either from the mild dignity of their manners, or the measured elegance of their dress. The light of the near hearth-flame played softly on their snow-white garments and on their fine features, which bordered on the paleness of the lily.

The three kind relatives would not

rest till their pilgrims were stretched upon the couches. Then the sisters brought to each of them a cup of warm wine, and entreated that they would give themselves up to a refreshing day-sleep after their wanderings through the night. Upon this they retired with Godfrey to the other end of the hall.

As Arnald was falling into a gentle doze, he heard their whisperings.

"Brother Godfrey," said the one,—"Have you been kind enough to bring with you some game for the entertainment of the strangers?"

"No, my good sister Honorine,"—was the answer,—"for just as I was setting out for the chace, I met our guests. But I know too well your address in managing—and yours, no less, my dear Clementine,—to be at all alarmed for the pilgrims' entertainment. If, however, you would not think it unkind in me to leave you alone with the

strangers, I should much like to try my fortune in the chace again."

"Provided, only, it will not too much fatigue you, brother Godfrey," said Clementine,—and with a graceful bow, which the maidens as gracefully answered, the hunter hastened from the chamber. Smiling, but with delighted feelings, the weary Minstrel soon sank into slumber.

The tones of a harp, and those, indeed, well known, were upon Arnald's ear as he awoke. The sisters were playing and singing the Autumnal song which he had composed in the garden-grounds of Castle Bisiers, at the time of Alearda's presenting him with the brilliant dagger. An indescribable longing after the sight of his distant mistress now penetrated his soul; while his agreeable hostesses were relating at large when and where the celebrated Arnald of Maraviglia had composed the

song, the Minstrel burnt with desire for the continuance of his journey; this was partly that he might be so much the sooner in the neighbourhood of Castle Bisiers, but more because he thought every useless rest was afflicting and dangerous to Alearda and the little Bertha. But weariness, with a weight of lead, still lay on all his limbs, and flung him back again upon the couch against his inclination.

In the meantime Godfrey had returned with game, and the sisters set themselves diligently about its preparation; still, however, they preserved the port and unconstrained dignity of noble, well-educated women, while their brother in a most obliging manner brought them wood and coals, and took every opportunity of showing them politeness and affection.

The conversation still turned, for the most part, on Master Arnald of Maraviglia; nothing was omitted that could

make the pilgrims understand who this celebrated man was, and how and where he led his life. This time Misura had no temptation to tell his hosts what guest they really harboured; on the contrary, all was extremely pleasant and delightful to him, and any change would have been an interruption.

The repast was served up, the game being prepared in a variety of elegant little dishes, and Robert brought some flasks of excellent native wine, from which Godfrey helped his sisters, his guest, and himself, with much satisfaction. From the way in which Clementine handed a glass to the old domestic, Arnald perceived that, in their usual mode of life, he also had his place at the table; the Minstrel, therefore, did not rest till he had taken his accustomed seat, upon which all fell with evident delight into the usual tone of hearty and familiar intercourse.

Soon again the discourse reverted to

Master Arnald of Maraviglia, who seemed to rule here like an invisible house-friend. Even the old Robert knew many of his war-songs by heart, and sang them full of ardent animation, though with the trembling voice of age. Godfrey's cheeks and eyes began to glow, while his sisters drooped their heads in disorder, and with entreating looks seemed to implore him to desist. Arnald, who did not perceive this, said to Godfrey;—"I know a ballad that the Minstrel of Maraviglia has composed upon an antient legend of your race, my noble Lord of Montalban. It can hardly have come to your ears; I will recite it, therefore, to you and to the ladies:

"From his antient tow'r, driven
By the Ganelon's deceit,
Stood the noble hero, Reinald,
Sad before his father's seat.
Sad he look'd toward the portals,
They were clos'd to his despair;
Sad he gaz'd upon the turrets,
Stranger banners floated there;

Straight then he blew an angry call,
No warder answer'd from the wall.

"But from out the clouds of evening,
In the rolling of the storm,
Look'd down on the fainting warrior
Many a high and threat'ning form.
Stain'd with wounds, as heroes should be,
These the grandsires of his race;—
Well he knew the angry visions
Frowning on their son's disgrace;
And in the wind's long wailing sigh,
Full well he knew their wrathful cry.

"'Who then mourns before the castle?
Why does not the drawbridge fall?
What waves forth from yonder turrets?
Stranger banners on our wall?
Hear ye not?—the castle's master
Winds his horn—will none reply?'—
Gush'd the burning tears of anguish
From the fainting hero's eye.
Wakes then at once the sleeping fires,
And thus he calls upon his sires:

"'From his hearth Montalban's driven!—
Yes, the shameful tale is true;
But from out the wreck are left him
Heart to dare and hand to do.
Bold in love and bold in battle,
He roams o'er the sea and land.
Rest ye then contented, heroes,
In your old heroic band.—

Midst wounds and blood your scion springs,
And wide o'er earth a shadow flings.'

" And the old heroic spirits
Heard with transport valour's tale;
Smiles came o'er the angry visions
As they vanished on the gale.
Yes, Montalban, thou art fallen;
Wild flowers on thy ruins bloom;
Once the heroes' place of revel,
Now their dark and mouldering tomb.
Yet in Reinald's deeds of fame,
Still shall live Montalban's name."

" I can bear it no longer," exclaimed Godfrey, and, setting aside all respect of manners, he started up and embraced the old Robert with a glow of transport that flung a joyful reflexion on the pale cheeks of the old man;—then again he seized a huge antique sword that stood in a corner, and clasping it to his breast continued for a long time to cry; " Oh! my father's sword! My brave father's sword!"

The old Robert took the cap from his bald head, folded his hands, and

said, with eyes up-cast to heaven; "God bless the brave Sir Arnald of Maraviglia! He has composed a noble song, and, as I hope, to the infinite profit of this house."

The sisters looked with doubtful and melancholy wonder at these ebullitions.

"But, brother Godfrey," said Honorine at length.—"Have you forgotten, that you promised long ago never to withdraw from us your protection, and to banish all thoughts of adventure in the world?"

"You then called us tender flowers," added Clementine,—"and intended to be always our watchful gardener. But now it seems you have other thoughts. All of course is as you please, dear brother Godfrey, and we shall pray to the Lord most fervently for your welfare, but,—"

Overpowered by her tears she was silent. Godfrey replaced the sword in its old corner; by a strong effort he

assumed his former courteousness, and protested that he would not only keep his promise, but would do it with particular pleasure, as there could be no better occupation in the world than to defend such sweet and noble ladies and live in their society.—"Even the circumscription, in which we move, adds new charms to the pleasures of this rural habitation."

Robert looked down in sorrow, while the sisters uttered many grateful and flattering things to Godfrey. At last Honorine said;

"And believe me, brother Godfrey, if you could ask the Master of Maraviglia, his habits and disposition would give you no other counsel than that which your own most amiable gallantry has itself suggested in your heart."

"Lady,"—replied the Minstrel,—"I would not advise you to leave the decision of this question to Sir Arnald of Maraviglia; with whatever purity and

humbleness he may strive to serve noble women, he yet knows that such service is seldom better or more pleasantly rendered than beneath the helmet and the shield, with the well-proved weapon in the hand."

The ladies looked at him in wonder, and the old Robert said; "By Heaven! I feel more and more at this pilgrim's words, as if it were Sir Arnald himself that spoke."

"Don't dwell so perpetually upon him," replied the Minstrel evasively,—"but think on your own name, lovely Honorine. Honorine of Montalban! Is there in the world a more glorious title? And you tremble when honour calls your brother! Oh! when Godfrey placed his father's sword in darkness, there was a distinct echo in mine ear as if the noble weapon sighed hoarsely in its brazen scabbard!—And you, Lady Clementine of Montalban, can it be pleasing to your sweet mildness that this noble scion of

knighthood should pine in sad desire after deeds, which might be worthy of you and of himself? Is he only at times to be awakened to happier dreams by the sound of the hunting-horn in the forest? Do you indeed believe that he who was born to arms, and yet might not carry them, could ever know an hour of real enjoyment?"

He had risen from his seat, and remained standing in deep, melancholy meditation, his sparkling eyes fixed on Godfrey in noble pity. The latter hid his glowing forehead in his hands.

With slow but determined step, Honorine walked up to the sword, inclined before it deeply, then clasped it with her tender hands, and laid it upon her brother's arm. At the same time, Clementine had taken from the opposite wall, a shield that was beautifully painted with the armorial bearings of their house, though somewhat darkened by age, and now made it ring before the youth upon

the table, exclaiming:—"Luck to you, my gallant brother! Ride forth to fame and victory!"

The inspired Godfrey drew himself upright, and held the arms in either hand high above his head. In a single minute he had become taller, handsomer, manlier. As the spring-odours, struggling from a shut-up blossom, give promise of a noble fruit, so did the thoughts of future glory breathe visibly about his princely forehead, that was now bare from the backward streaming of his ringlets.

Robert, with tears of joy, lay at the feet of the two sisters, protesting that he would be their faithful Castellain in their brother's absence, and that he well knew God would richly bless his age with mind and power for the purpose.

Arnald and Misura now took up their pilgrim hats and staves and bade farewell.

"I think I know whom we have entertained," said Honorine softly.

"What I have spoken, I have spoken in the name of the Lord," replied Arnald. "How the messenger may be called is nothing to the purpose. May God bless you!"

And the wanderers went forth into the fields that sparkled beneath the wintry sun.

CHAPTER VII.

The toilsome journey approached its end. Already the Aquitanian waters were at times visible from the hills of Brittany.—At last after a forced march through night they came out from the woods upon the daylight;—the green salt-waves were beating immediately against the rock on which they stood. Damp gray clouds chased each other in wild sport across the firmament; proudly and loftily the billows lifted up their heads that were crowned with foam. At the brink of the cliff were railings for the protection of travellers, and as Arnald leant against them in exhaustion he looked out upon the immeasurableness of the dreary sky and troubled ocean; it seemed to him as if his earthly fortune were floating away in

the waters, and he already foreboded the bright and flowery coasts of the happy isles beyond. Even Misura stood in doubtful thought, and once drew in a deep breath that sounded almost like a sigh—a thing which was not often heard from his heroic bosom.

"God be merciful to him who would this day make a pilgrimage to the Saint!" —exclaimed a voice close beside them. It was an old shepherd, with venerable unaffected aspect, and long grey hair upon his head and chin; he greeted the strangers cordially.

"Thanks for your good wish," answered Arnald. "It is spoken for me; if the pilgrim-rock lies near enough, I hope to ascend it this very day, or I am ready to perish in the effort, according to the inscrutable will of Heaven."

"The last is the most probable," replied the old man. "Do you not see how dizzily the winds and clouds and waters are in motion? The birds can

scarcely hold themselves in air, and whirl about in giddy circles. How then can a human being climb the rugged steep to-day? Defer your enterprise till to-morrow, or indeed till the morning after, for this storm will last, and seems to be hardly natural."

"And you are so exhausted by the journey, dear Arnald!" exclaimed Misura tenderly.

"But does not the breath of this wind sound like an anxious sigh? Do not these lonely rain-drops fall down like anxious tears?—Already perhaps at the bare possibility of my delay the sick child moans, and the lovely lady weeps!—And to let that continue till to-morrow, or till the morning after!—for you hear that the tempest threatens to last so long."

—"It may last the whole week,"—added the shepherd.

"Sigh not, Bertha! Weep not my lofty misties!"—said Arnald softly but

firmly to himself.—"To-day I bring my pious journey to an end."

Then, turning to the old man, he entreated that he would lead him to his dwelling, if it were near, and there instruct him what was to be observed in the pilgrimage.—"I am irrevocably fixed," he exclaimed, "either this day to look for the last time upon the sun, or to look down from the top of the rock in gratitude for my success."

"Irrevocably fixed!"—sighed Misura, like a mournful echo: but he well knew that after such a declaration a Maraviglia was not to be persuaded, and therefore followed his friend in silence. The shepherd then led them through many a winding path to the sea-shore, where his lonely hut stood in the middle of a field, that was as if fenced and secured from the flood by rocks and mountains.

They were now seated on the rush-mats within the little dwelling, and

Arnald, enjoying for a moment the comforts of repose, at the same time emptied in long draughts a goblet of excellent cyder, with which the host sought to refresh the strangers.

"You see, Arnald, what good rest does you,"—said Misura.

"Well," cried the Minstrel, laughing,—"if it does me good, it invigorates me, and therefore not a moment is to be lost. Say on, my good shepherd, who is the Saint that dwells upon the sea-rock? and how is one to act, that the pilgrimage may be accomplished to the honour of God and to the weal of him for whom it is undertaken?"

The old man looked down for a time in thought. At length he said; "If you are resolved to know it, dear Sir, I must even give you the instruction. Thus it is;

"When the sea begins to ebb, you then, with pious thoughts in the soul, and pious prayer upon the lips, follow the flood far-

ther and farther, deep into the ocean-limits, and precisely up to the rock, which you will see lying at a distance from the shore, high, and steep, and dark, like some tower deserted by man to the possession of unearthly things. But good spirits inhabit there, for its top is decorated with an image of Saint-Sebastian."

"Sebastian!" cried Arnald joyfully; "Oh excellent omen!"

"But,"—continued the shepherd warningly, — "the Saint is somewhat strange to look at in his antique image. Beaten by the fury of the winds and waves, he looks down with stern and gloomy features, while from all sides of the figure stick out brazen spears and arrows, as being the arms with which the dear knight was shot to death by Heathens. The pilgrims, who have been fortunate enough to reach it, cannot sufficiently describe their anxious feelings when beneath the powerful influence of this image."

"Arnald,"—exclaimed Misura,—"do you only think that your dear Balta has chosen Sebastian for his patron Saint, and is himself now called Sebastian."

Arnald nodded in friendly assent, and entreated the old man to go on in his relation. He yearned more and more for the adventure.

"Even at the time of ebb," continued the shepherd,—"you cannot reach the rock with dry feet. You must go up to the girdle at least through the waters, which swell and roar and glitter so wonderfully, that you must have a firm mind to keep the direction of the cliff, and indeed to know whether you are going forwards or backwards, whether you stand upright or are sinking and tumbling into the ocean."

Arnald pressed his hand against his exhausted brows as if in dizziness.

"What is the use," said Misura angrily,—"what is the use of making life already bitter to my friend by your description? If, indeed, your hope was to

divert him from the pilgrimage to-day, that, I would willingly do myself,—but I can assure you nothing will come of the attempt;—leave him, therefore, the strength that remains from his exertions, and proceed quickly with your tale,—not forgetting any precautionary means against the danger."

"There are none," replied the old man with a sigh,—"none, except when the rock is reached to climb up at once without reflexion wherever you can, for step or path is not to be expected. Avoid looking back upon the sea, and keep the trust of the Lord in your heart and his holy name upon your lips. But that, dear pilgrim, it seems to me you already do of yourself; I had no need so frequently to recommend it."

He took Arnald's hand with friendly warmth, and looked into his eyes with deep emotion.

"God will help!"—he added,—"you will hardly return from the rock

till morning, for the tide will flow again before you have done your prayer, perhaps even before you have reached the summit of the cliff. Prepare yourself, therefore, for a stormy, dark, and solitary night."

"Have no care for that,"—replied Arnald. "There is a recollection within my breast that never leaves me destitute of joy and comfort. The heavenly and omnipotent love beams over, and in, us all, and I shall lean my exhausted limbs on the pedestal of Saint Sebastian."

"Yet one thing," said the shepherd. "Two strange beings inhabit near the shore under the ruins of a Roman temple. They are accustomed to throw all manner of provocations in the way of travellers—have nothing to do with them."

Hereupon he left the room to take care of his little herds for the rest of the day, for he intended to guide the pilgrim to the heathen fane already mentioned.

CHAPTER VIII.

When the two friends were alone, Arnald said with a solemn voice;

"It was noble in you, Misura, not to doubt for a moment my going through with what I had once spoken, as long as soul and body hold together. 'Tis, therefore, thou strong, faithful heart, that I now confide to you a secret, which, in the moment before this travel, I would have said to none,—not even to Alearda."

"You saw how strangely I was affected by the shepherd's tale of the dizzying waters,—dear friend, amongst all those who can look death fairly in the face, there is not perhaps one so subject to giddiness as myself. It may proceed from the heavenly gift which has been given to me in such abundance, and

which we call,—FANCY. It is to me as if I already saw myself tumbling into the wild sweep of waters;—yes,—within me are dreadful voices, which cry out—Down! Down!—Down, I say! Resistance avails you nothing!—Down, and you get rid of the pain at once!"

He shuddered and was silent. From Misura's eyes poured down single, heavy drops.

"Why are you so much agitated?" said Arnald, again putting on a friendly smile.—"As yet I am by no means lost. But in case it should come to that,—still, my faithful Misura,—still must the dark prophecy of the castle-spirit be overcome—still must Bertha be saved, and the tears of Alearda be appeased. In that case you will complete what Arnald with his true inclination could not accomplish.—Is it not so, my brave companion?"

"I will prepare for the pilgrimage directly. To-morrow with the earliest, I begin it."

"Oh," said Arnald, laughing,—"you are too prompt with your consolation."

"You yet live!" replied Misura,—"Yes, truly, my sweet friend, you yet live. But can I help seeing how that soft smile lights up your pale cheeks only as the setting glory of life? Farewel! Farewel! You discharge your vow, and die in a pious work, but still this is a parting."

Arnald remained for a long time silent. At last he said,—"You may perhaps be right, and I am prepared for the end. Sometimes, indeed, I feel as if death were very near and very certain of his prey—as if he were rustling distinctly over me on his raven wings. But that too the Lord may yet avert or at least soften. And have you less confidence in me than our pious host has? He thought it was visible in me that I prayed with love and zeal, and he hoped much from my devotion of temper."

"The kingdom of Heaven is no doubt

the highest. But yet in human guise my heart is sad for you."

The door slowly opened, and the shepherd walked in with an earnest look; "The dominion of the ebb is at its full." Arnald took his hat and staff.

"May I not go with you to the strand?" asked Misura.

"Heaven may perhaps lead you thither to-morrow," replied Arnald, with subdued voice. "For this day it will be satisfied with me alone."

The two friends shook hands silently, but warmly, and separated.

CHAPTER IX.

Lofty columns towered from the dark wood, in the midst of which were ruined walls. On the other side the sea was visible between the dwarfish sand-hills.

"There dwell the hostile strangers," said the herdsman, pointing to the ruins, "and there is the way to the rock of promise. God and the holy Sebastian be aidant to you, my heart-loved pilgrim!"

With this he again saluted the Minstrel kindly, and took his way home with slow step and in evident affliction.

Arnald advanced a few steps till he could see the rock. The lofty image of the Saint stared wondrously from the cliff upon the moist sky, that now began to grow darker and darker beneath the storm-clouds. Incessantly, and in lament-

ing murmurs the sea rolled against the barren stone, like a huge and ever gaping grave, overspread by a waving veil of sadness.

"Thy will be done, O Lord!" said Arnald, and knelt down in silent prayer. When again he rose, his soul was joyful, and he went on with devoted mind and unburthened conscience,—with cheerful vigour in his heart as in his limbs.

He was already close upon the shore, when he heard behind him a wild and clamorous singing. Indignant at the interruption, he looked around, when from amongst the pine-trees came a figure in wide, flowing garments, that beckoned to him, and sang these words in the Provençal language:

"Where then lies the stone of wisdom?
Not beneath the ocean-falls;
Wherefore seek it in the waters,
When in your neglected walls
The buried, the mysterious light,
Lies hidden in a long, long night?
Crescenzio calls! Crescenzio calls!

" What then is this earthly being ?
Hope that mocks, and truth that grieves.—
Best not in the strife to mingle,
But, when day the ocean leaves,
Seek for truth in that dark page
Buried now for many an age.
The Arnold, he of Brescia, calls!

" Ask not for it of the living ;
'Tis the secret of the dead ;
Far from here a Moorish hero
Slumbers in his narrow bed :
He the secret found, but died
In the hour of fortune's pride,
The Abdul calls ! The Hamet calls !

" Back then, from the strand of ocean ;
Enter then our holy fane ;
There you'll drink of wisdom's fountain,
There will shake off earthly pain.
There the gnomes shall service do,
Earth be green and skies be blue.
Now let your fancy guess who calls !"

" Methinks I have heard such a voice before, but there is now something better in my contemplation than the poring upon that."—As Arnald spoke thus he advanced, without looking round him, into the deep, where the ebb gave him

more and more space on the untrodden ground.

Just then the tumultuous singing began again, when it was interrupted by a distant and anxious cry. A voice sounded from the temple-ruins,—"Ultramonte! Ultramonte! Show me new images, or I shall go mad!"

With a sullen expression of discontent the pursuer ceased, and hastened back to his fearful dwelling. Arnald well knew what enemy had been at his heels, but he turned away his thoughts, fixing them upon God and his lofty mistress, and upon the holy business to the accomplishment of which he had now made the first steps.

It seemed to him as if the billows were his servants, for, as he advanced, they still retreated farther and farther, though always with hoarse and sullen murmurings. But the things which lay upon the deserted sand,—the helpless sea-beasts

of terrific form, the hideous fishes, the rankling polypi, grasping at each other with long and hostile arms,—all deeper and deeper poured into Arnald's breast the dark and spectral presentiments of death. Nor, indeed, is there any true bard, any mind wholly devoted to the minstrel art, that would not feel the shuddering of dread at such wild appearances. At the same time it is true that all must thither where duty and faithful service order them, and so it was with Arnald.

Already the sea would yield no farther, and its first waves were on his foot,—already he had advanced into the green mirror,—higher and higher foamed the beating billows against the wanderer. The rock seemed to retreat before him with the motion of the floods, and he himself felt as if he were driven about, now sidewards, and now backwards, and now again beyond his object. The words of the shepherd thrilled through his me-

mory,—in that moment his foot had nearly slipped on the rough invisible sands, and himself been cast forth by the swelling waves into the infinity of ocean. With fervour he lifted his voice to God and to his Saint; and soon again he could pronounce to himself the name of Alearda. With this he had reached the rock, and raising himself from the billowy flood, he held fast by a projection of the stone, where with deep-drawn breath he rested his worn-out body.

The rock looked wildly and steeply down upon him from above, concealing the image of Saint Sebastian by its overhanging ruggedness. In fearful solitude the pilgrim hung between the waters and the summit of the cliff. He felt that this was no time for hesitation, and began his pathless way with the utmost exertion of his strength. Often did it seem to him as if his foot must slip, his exhausted hand give way. Loudly roared the waves from the deep below,—with sullen howl

the wind whistled about the rock above, —his pilgrim-hat fell off—for a moment the storm whirled it furiously around, and then drove it downwards into the abyss of waters. Soon the pilgrim staff rolled after it. Arnald heard it beating against the rock in its fall,—he could have given himself up for lost, but prayer lent him new energy, and then in the moments of pause Alearda's image beamed again brightly before his soul—as the inspired soldier climbs the walls of the citadel, so Arnald struggled with glowing animation towards the summit.

God had holpen. The Minstrel stood on the rock above, before the image of the holy Sebastian.

Exhausted by the toil he fell upon his knees in silent prayer!—Long did he remain thus, while wondrous images floated before his fancy, and his senses were overshadowed by partial darkness. Still he felt himself blest beyond expression—Bertha was saved,—Alearda wept no more.

At length the wild raging of the sea awoke him to a full consciousness of outward things. Drawn up by the tempest of the wind the tide came roaring on, and boiled with flooding waters against the far-off shore; nor was it long before the billows lifted up their white gigantic heads on all sides of the rock itself. The darkness of evening lay heavily upon the horizon; and in a short time the coast of Brittany had disappeared. Strangely looked the image of Saint Sebastian upon the watery clouds.

But Arnald felt nothing of that horror with which the image had inspired other pilgrims; on the contrary this song burst out from a joyous and unshaken heart:

"In proud defiance of my weary frame,
Upon this rock, in evening's cold grey light,
My spirit burns, a lonely watch-fire's flame,
When all around is one vast world of night.
Still is the glow of hope within me bright;—
Thanks to my lofty mistress, who hath smil'd
In glorious vision on my aching sight,
Though clouds are dark, and waves and winds are wild,
Peace dwells within this breast as infant slumber.

"And dare ye rage, ye children of the storm,
As if in mock'ry of this blessed guide?
The angels float around her angel form
Like sun-beams hov'ring on the mountain's side.
To save us from the path of erring pride
The Lord oft sends these servants of his will,
And so with me:—Roll on, thou angry tide!
Blow winds!—Earth, air, and sea with madness fill!
My song but louder swells while all within is still.

"Fair pious eyes, the lights of Heaven, beam
On the pure bard, who weaves a wreath of song
E'en from night's shade and terror's darkling dream,
That well may shine 'midst yonder starry throng.
Within his breast with current clear and strong
Affection flows, allow'd by Him above,
As silvery tides that gently gush along,
Through rushy mead and summer's leafy grove—
So pure the Minstrel's heart! So true the Minstrel's love.

"Oh let not censure touch my ardent strain
As if my flight were on too bold a wing;
His was the deed without whom all is vain,—
The fount of love, and life's eternal spring—
Still let me God and this his servant sing;
All, all is his—and 'midst the wild winds war
Sebastian's sainted image seems to fling
A glory on the waste of waves afar,—
Where all around is dark, a bright and lonely star.

" See how the night on weary wing sinks down!
Hark to the roaring of the yesty deep!
Old ocean swells with darker, darker frown,
While Heaven's stars in cloudy darkness sleep.
Through troubled air the spectral shadows sweep,
Yet still peace wakes before my Lady's bow'r,
Where no tears fall save those which blossoms weep
In dewy night.—Though storms may round me low'r,
Nor winds, nor waves, nor tears, have o'er my mistress pow'r.

" Yet o'er me in my weakness, on this lone
And barren rock, protecting angels spread
Their shadowing wings—Then though the tempest moan
For its near prey, I slumber without dread,—
Nay in the hope that grateful dreams may shed
Their brightness o'er my couch—E'en now I find
The beating of their wings above my head,—
Their nets of gold around my slumber bind—
They lift me to yon seas of chrystal on the wind."

CHAPTER X.

It fell out as he had wished. No sooner was he cradled in a gentle slumber than the world of dreams unfolded itself in all its glory.

He stood upon a tower of Castle Maraviglia, but the whole building shone and glittered with indescribable splendour like to a fairy palace. At the same time the walls were transparent, and every chamber was inhabited by beautiful women and knights of princely loftiness. Arnald knew that they were his ancestors. In the garden played those of his race who had died in childhood; they wore angel-forms, and in sportive mockery cast flowers at each other, which, as they flew, were changed to butterflies, that wound themselves about the heads of the little ones in flut-

tering garlands. Playing upon the lyre, and glittering in arms, appeared the heroes who had fallen in youth; they wandered through the glimmering alleys by the side of lovely maidens, who had died as young, or danced with them on the blooming meadows. In the lists Arnaldi's grandfather exercised the noble horse which had borne him in his last death-battle. Around were many young knights, who learnt from him, and rejoiced in him, and each rejoiced in the other. But upon the castle platform sate the great Minstrel-King and played upon his harp; on his head was a splendid crown; a silver-worked mantle, the garb of Troubadours, was over his knightly and glittering armour. The tones of his music shot like beams of light through the lists, and the gardens, and the chambers; the women wove them as delicate gold-threads into their curious tapestry, or employed them on their spindles; the knights sharpened their swords upon

them with echoing clang; the youths and maidens formed them into nets with which they caught each other in playful mockery; the children rode upon them; the girls planted them as golden flower-stems in the earth.

"This must be Paradise," thought Arnald,—"and yet it is also but Castle Maraviglia."

At the same time the tower on which he stood rose higher. It was as if it rested on bright, shining arches which expanded and curved themselves in the soft and languishing accords.—"These must be the tones of the Minstrel-King," thought Arnald.—And he still came nearer and nearer to the starry Heaven, for he observed that it was really night, and that the brightness proceeded from Castle Maraviglia.

On a sudden the constellation, Alcarde, burst upon him in surprising proximity and brilliance. Humble and dazzled he declined his eyes to earth, and looked directly into Castle Bisiers.

There sate Alearda in her blooming, splendid chamber, reading in a book which Arnald had composed and copied for her. The little Bertha played about by her mother, cheerfully but with the modest stillness of a maiden, and Arnald felt an anxious desire to give her some of the bright playthings, with which the children amused themselves in Castle Maraviglia. Then the child got up and nestled coaxingly to her mother, saying; "Oh, let me see the pictures!—there are no playthings so pretty as pictures! —and read me too some of the chivalrous tales of the good Arnald."

With thoughtful earnestness Alearda did as the child requested; and while she was reading, the Viscount entered and asked what had flung so melancholy a veil upon her lovely brow; to which she answered:—"I was reading the pages of the departed Arnald of Maraviglia, and thought, as I read, on all his pious faithfulness."

"He was a true and valiant soldier,"

—replied the Viscount;—"such a companion in the way of honour I miss most heavily."

"God be praised that it is so!" said a gentle and well-known voice close by Arnald.—"I am satisfied with the current of your life."

—It was the dear Walter—And now in heavenly ecstacy melted away the dream.

CHAPTER XI.

Bright and clear stood the morning on the waters; Sebastian's image appeared to smile in the blaze of the young sun; the ebb was now almost the conqueror, and with every moment left the passage more open to the beach whence the early songsters warbled as they rose into the blue air, while the shepherds, piping and singing, drove out their flocks over the early grass. Never had Arnald awoke more handsome or more cheerful.

He again knelt down upon the rock, thanking the Lord of Hosts, and praising the good knight Sebastian for the victorious watch of the day and the dreamy revelations of the recent night. Then, with joy pure as the love of angels, he set out upon his return.

Looking down from the rock at first, the depth seemed somewhat dizzying; but he, who had succeeded as far as our friend, might well fancy that therein was an irrevocable pledge for the success of a whole life. With the certain speed of the chamois Arnald climbed down the side of the cliff, that was alternately dangerous from its smoothness and its ruggedness, while his descent was refreshed by the morning wind, and illumined by the fires of the youthful sun. It was almost as if the rock were one of the towers of Castle Maraviglia, as he had seen it in the splendour of his dream.

But when from the last shelf the pilgrim leaped down upon the sand, that was now covered with gentle waters, a convulsive agony seized him in all his limbs, and lay like an iron band upon his breast, where it throbbed and burnt with the glow of fire. Never before had he felt any think like it. A feverish shivering thrilled to his very heart, and seemed

as it would say—"I am death,—or at least its unfailing messenger!"—What, however, was all this now to Arnald? Alearda wept no more, the tender flowret Bertha bloomed again, the Viscount would never forget the honourable companion of his warfare.—Freshly and joyfully the Minstrel strode on towards the shore, where lay his pilgrim-staff, which had been washed thither by the yesterday's flood, and left by the present ebb; Arnald seized it gladly, acknowledging this also for a good token amongst many others.

He was already on his way to the cot of the hospitable shepherd, cherishing in his fancy the image of Misura's delight at finding again victorious the friend whom he had given up for lost; at this moment some one ran towards him from the pine-tree thicket, in which stood the Roman temple, calling after him with a loud cry that was almost a roar, and in his right hand flourishing a Moorish

sabre. Arnald stood still, as he was accustomed to do in cases of danger.

"Tagliaduro! Tagliaduro!"—cried the maniac, with inflamed features and thundering voice, at the same time making a blow at Arnald. For a time the Minstrel with great forbearance merely turned off the blows, but as with the increasing fury of the stranger the peril also increased, the native wrath of a Maraviglia blazed forth in Arnald, and with a violent blow on the breast he threw his antagonist to the earth.

Scarcely had the vanquished one fallen, than there knelt by his side a man in flowing garments, who rubbed his temples carefully with a precious and fragrant ointment.

"Did the maniac mistake me for a Marquis of Tagliaduro?" asked Arnald. "He called out that name as he rushed against me."

"This,"—replied the other, still anxiously employed about his companion,

" this is the unhappy Rinaldo of Tagliaduro himself; and according to knightly custom he cried out his family name in the attack."

" It was so, then!—the poor maniac!" said Arnald, hanging thoughtfully over him. But, on the sudden looking into the face of his companion, he exclaimed, " And you are the wondrous Master Ultramonte!"

" You might have known that yesterday,"—replied the other,—" if you had not absurdly run into the sea, whence, with struggling and climbing and praying, you have perhaps brought your death, unless my art preserves you."

" I hope not to need it," said Arnald. " But even in the worst case I will not accept the dark and dangerous aid."

Ultramonte shook his head with a bitter laugh, and went on with his exertions about Rinaldo.

The Marquis at length opened his eyes again, slowly raised himself, and stood

there before Arnold, pale, thoughtful, and inexpressibly touching in the noble ruin of his features. After a time he inclined himself gracefully, saying;

"Dear pilgrim, you must forgive my wild attack. The fault indeed lies with my wise friend, here. Only see,—an angel has floated from heaven, and precisely into my soul. What it wants there I know not, for the house is much too dark and narrow for such a glorious guest. But it is there; you may believe me that.—See!—It lives here!"—and he pointed between his eyes—"exactly here, where the power of sight is.—And there I must always see it, and the dark house, which they call my soul, begins to run round in giddiness before its dazzling brilliance.—Ultramonte says, that just so the moon turns round, but my soul is no bright, peaceful moon; it is at most a comet, fiery red—"

The burning colour of wrath again mounted into his cheeks, but soon, com-

posing himself, he said with a melancholy smile;

"It was thus with me when I ran at you. If Ultramonte had only been sooner here with his images! For at such times he is forced to show me images,—strange, wondrous, glittering images, that dance here and there upon the walls of our temple-dwelling, and sing too,—sing beautiful songs in the long forgotten language of the antient Greeks. One is called Pallas Athenæ, and that comes the nearest to the angel figure in my soul. But it does not reach her,—Oh! it does not reach her by far. No more of that. And before these forms, dear Sir, the image in my soul generally vanishes, and then it is to me for hours as if I were indeed, very proud, and powerful, and blissful."

"Infernal jugglery!" cried Arnald, turning to Ultramonte with indignation,—"In this way you will not heal him; in this way you will utterly destroy him."

"If you could only see our images,—our lovely images!" murmured Tagliaduro. "Then you would think otherwise."

"Well spoken, my poor son," added Ultramonte;—"and he shall see them,—the haughty stranger!—The apostate scholar!—He SHALL see them."

"SHALL!" re-echoed Arnald, proudly erecting himself,—"Only God, his Lady, and his liege, speak so to a Maraviglia."

"Thou bewitched fool!" cried Ultramonte, pale with anger,—"Battle to thee for life and death with us both at the same time, or hospitality in our temple-dwelling—choose!"

"Battle for life and death with you both at the same time!" answered the Minstrel coolly. "The choice is not difficult."

With this he lifted up his pilgrim staff, as a war-club, and stood ready for their reception. As a last resource Alearda's dagger clashed beneath his mantle. Again the crooked sabre glittered in Rinaldo's

right hand, while Ultramonte drew out from his long garment a mighty sickle, as a certain instrument of death. The fight began.

It would have been much for a fresh, vigorous man to have withstood two such opponents with success; Arnald, who was thoroughly exhausted, could only keep off any wound of importance, and his mortal overthrow was near,—very near,—when a loud, indignant cry, like a clap of thunder, broke in upon the combatants. A few crushing blows followed on the heads of Ultramonte and Tagliaduro, from which they both began to stagger; in a few minutes Misura had stretched Rinaldo on the ground—for it was Misura who thus fearfully interfered,—and having raised the struggling Ultramonte upon his shoulders, he ran with him to the sea-shore.—"I'll drown the beast! I'll drown the beast!"—he half exclaimed, half sang, with ludicrous indignation.

But the Troubadour uttered an earnest—"Halt!"—Misura stopped and looked at him in discontent.

"Again you will not allow that I am acting according to strict justice. But is not the life of this murderous sorcerer forfeited to us? And besides, we shall do the whole country a service in drowning such lumber where the sea is deepest. Wait only till I have managed this one, for he is still froward; I'll soon despatch the other."

"In that you will do me a service,—a real service of affection,"—faintly murmured Rinaldo.

A second time the Minstrel cried,—"Halt!"—and the words of Christian love and charity to enemies flowed like honey from his lips.—"Has not God,"—he concluded—"Has not God even now been merciful to me, poor wretched sinner? And to you, at the same time, O Misura? For I know full well how dear you hold me.—And is it for us in

this very hour to judge and to condemn."

At these words Misura suffered the dark Ultramonte to glide from his shoulders, and, running to Arnald, wept softly and gently, like a repentant child on the breast of reconciliation. But at length, raising himself up, he said;

"Let the creatures live,—as I myself am but a poor sinful worm before the Lord. Lucky, however, that I was just then on the point of accomplishing the pilgrimage for you. Oh, my Arnald! My heart-loved Arnald! Our old shepherd and myself long since thought you dead, and I have wept more in the last night than in my whole life beside, my boyish years included; but if I had not come in good time, then indeed would have been the storm of tears, or else of bloody execrations."

In the meantime their two antagonists had risen, weak and bleeding.

"You would compel me," said Arnald

to them—" to visit your heathen temple? *Compelled*, a Maraviglia will not be, but neither does he fear anything under God's protection. To-morrow, when I have rested, you may fetch me, Rinaldo, from the little hut upon the shore."

At these words Misura for a time shook his head thoughtfully; at last he said, " What a Maraviglia has promised, that will he perform—but what *Misura* has promised that also will *he* perform. And I now swear to you that I will not stir a step from Arnald if he enters your wizard pine-grove."

Hereat the two wild adversaries turned away with silent and humble gestures. Arnald, leaning on the arm of his faithful Misura, with pale cheeks, but a heavenly smile upon his lips, returned to the hospitable roof of the old shepherd.

CHAPTER XII.

Two days after this Arnald was sitting on the shore, not far from the cottage; about him in the fresh morn was a soft, foreboding spring-breeze; before him the ocean glittering in the beams of daylight. He touched his harp and thus he sang to it:

" Spirit within, that aye art bright!
Cradle thyself in the ocean's flow,
Or in the morning sun-beam's glow,
While drop the tones like the dews of night.

" Spirit within, that aye art glad!
God hath allow'd to thy earthly life
Victory's palm in many a strife,
As minstrel gay, or as pilgrim sad.

" Spirit within, thou purest fire!
God in this life's bewildering maze—
Hath sent forth an angel to guide thy ways,
And lead thy thoughts where thy steps aspire.

" Spirit within, that aye art still!
As sleep when it wreathes an infant brow,
With sword and with song you triumph now,
But for her—

A stinging pain contracted and pressed together his sickly bosom. He was compelled to leave off his song with a smile strange in its cheerfulness, and drawing breath with difficulty he looked down upon the earth, that was now lightly verdant with the harbingers of distant spring.

As he gazed Rinaldo came, pale and weeping, around a projection of the cliff, and said;

" If you can go on, I entreat you for God's sake, to finish your song of consolation. My bewildered life thirsts for it."

And Arnald nodded to him kindly, and again breathing freely he thus concluded the broken stanza;

But for her soon may rest beneath the hill.

" Spirit of life, thy penance is done!
Awake! Awake from the grave's dark night!
An angel thyself, look down in light
On the angel course of thy earthly sun."

" I might have been as happy as you are,"—sighed Rinaldo, and hiding his face, he flung himself at the feet of Arnald,—" but anguish raged so wildly in me!—and then I chanced upon these wild waters and Ultramonte's world of visions,—"

" Ultramonte's world of visions!" interrupted Arnald,—" That may indeed be wild, these waters are seldom so. See you not how the dear sun plays with them, and how the spring breathes delight upon the billows?"

" For you! For you, pure heart!"—said Rinaldo; " For me it is gone by. And, if I may advise you, do not look at the sad wonders of our heathen temple. There is always danger in it."

" It is no vain presumption, that im-

pels me," replied Arnald,—" it is to save you, and, if it may be, Ultramonte also. —Let us go."

With this he rose, and set out on the journey; at the same time the faithful Misura came out of his hut, and walked thoughtfully by his friend, while Rinaldo went on a good way in advance, as the gloomy guide of their adventure.

CHAPTER XIII.

The tangled pine-branches shed a melancholy twilight about the temple, even in the middle of the brightest day, serving at the same time as a protection to many parts of the broken roof. As the strangers entered upon the wood, a loud and hideous rustling swept the branches, that sounded half like warning and half like mockery. Darkly drawn together sate Ultramonte in the vestibule.

At the sight of Arnald he rose, and eying him with defiance, exclaimed;—"There comes the sick fool who gave away the command of all nature for a woman's smile—the fool, who from free, piteous humbleness devoted himself to the service of a mistress, contented, if

she would but permit him to die for her."

And his mocking laugh was answered by a wild echo from every chamber in the building.

"It seems," said Arnald—"that you have an invisible company; but they must be poor slaves who only laugh in chorus after their master, just as it takes him in the head. Dismiss them."

"That will I not. No master without his servants."

"You will not, dark sorcerer!—Well then, you compel and authorize me to do my part."

High in his right hand he stretched forth Alearda's dagger, the hilt upwards, and spoke with slow and solemn voice;

"Ye unholy beings that gather in these walls,—by this image of the cross! I conjure ye—appear! appear!"

A strange light quivered on the walls, which by degrees formed itself into various lovely images of gallant knights

and noble ladies. Rinaldo longingly stretched out his arms towards them; Ultramonte smiled, well pleased, softly murmuring; "Go on! Go on!"

Powerfully calling forth the tones of his exhausted breast in their early strength, Arnald now cried with a voice of thunder;

"Have I so evoked you? Is that your actual form? Be visible as you really are!—I will have truth!—by this symbol, truth!"

And as at times the clouds of the firmament, which at first only formed quiet lakes and smiling forests and forms of cherubs, are distorted by a sudden gust of wind into gigantic devils and griffins with hideous outspread wings—so did it happen here at Arnald's evocation.—Oh! what horrid shapes then flitted over the walls and even in the midst of the hall, wrestling and contending madly with each other.

"You boast too of your minstrelsy,"—

said Arnald;—"I will hear you sing: but, truth!—by this symbol, truth!"

At this such a horrible whistling, and screaming, and howling, echoed through the chambers, that Rinaldo fell to earth. By the exertion of all his strength Misura kept his usual countenance; Ultramonte whined for mercy.

Arnald, standing firm in all the glory of intrepid faith, signed away the tumultuous demons. They vanished,—and he raised the poor Tagliaduro, saying; "Now you know your beautiful images: take heed of them for the future."

All for a while were silent, till Ultramonte, rising proudly and loftily from his anguish, advanced to Rinaldo with a mocking smile and said; "Do you, really, believe this juggler with his confounding tricks? At first, indeed, they frightened me, but still one must be able to stand upright again. Now the whole seems sufficiently absurd.

Those, the Hellenic deities!—*that*, their solemn hymn!—Good truth, the most fabling monk had never invented aught more idle."

"Yes, wretched scoffer,"—said Arnald calmly—"according as you may understand it. The noble images, in which poets and philosophers figured God and nature, even in the darkness of fallen humanity—singing their immortal praises, pouring forth sweet language from holy lips and hinting at the ALL, the ONLY ONE—Oh! do you fancy that your dark magic can have power upon such images of brilliance? Do but look at them fitly—look at them in the light of Christianity—and you will fall down in love and veneration before God, acknowledging here too his might, his glory, and his mercy. Blessed, indeed, were those hours, in which my Altarbol led me to the halls of eternal revelation!—But your share

of it was but the dull residue — rough sensuality in festal garments, overweening arrogance in a sun-like glory—these concealed a blindness to God and death and resurrection—a bold rending of all veils where it concerned the mysteries of nature. In short you have all that the people ever had of these splendours, and for you they are idolatrous cobolds—devils within your own breast, and as such they serve you from without. Ah, Ultramonte! Thou wert once a darling child of nature—for that I well saw when I walked with you through the woods, and all life was so dear, and familiar, and intelligible to your ear and eye, caressing you and announcing mysteries from a thousand unseen tongues. —Oh! Ultramonte! whither art thou hurried?"

The voice of the Troubadour died away in sorrow; he looked with moist eyes upon the ground.

" Over the mountain and over the dale,
In grief and in joy, in sunshine and hail,
It hurried me then, it hurries me now;
But free is that life, as the bird's on the bough—
The life which the Gods of Olympus once gave,
To souls that were bright as the summer-lit wave."

Into such wild strains Ultramonte broke out on the sudden, and danced wildly around the hall; at the same time springing aloft to an almost incredible height, he tore the twigs from the pine-branches, and with wonderful agility wreathed them into garlands amongst his streaming gray locks. Sometimes it seemed as if he would call up the spirits, but no sooner did Arnald look at him with a warning gaze, or hold up the cross-formed dagger, than he again desisted, and at last with angry murmurs vanished into the interior chambers of the building.

Rinaldo, sinking exhausted on Maraviglia's breast, exclaimed;

" May I not go with you to the hut

upon the strand? As before I was lost here in blind rage and mad delight, so now I shall be utterly undone by these unmasked horrors."

Arnald encouraged him with words of truth and kindness, and, taking him by the arm, all three went to the shepherd's cot, while the sun shone, and the larks sang, high above their heads.

CHAPTER XIV.

With the blossoms of spring awoke also the blossoms of piety and love and resignation in Rinaldo's soul, before the songs and discourses of the Minstrel. Arnald, however, could but seldom sing, for a morbid pain more and more contracted his breast, that was once so full-toned and capacious. If Ultramonte was false in other things, he was not so in saying that Arnald's health was irretrievably shaken by the labours of his pilgrimage. But the true Minstrel, regardful of the warning that tells us to work while the day lasts, before the night comes and no one can work any longer,—only laboured so much the more assiduously at beautiful songs and tales of all sorts, and particularly at consoling themes for Rinaldo,

who now was never from his side. His longing desire to return home to Castle Bisiers was for a time checked by his sickly state, and still more by the obligation of not leaving the poor Tagliaduro, before he knew him to be in the safe way to salvation.

One morning Rinaldo appeared at his bed side, as if transformed, his eyes bright and clear, his lips shadowed by a gentle smile, and said;

"It has, I think, been revealed to me what I am to do for the future, in this lovely world. I shall not venture again before Alearda's brow, but respect her stilly and piously in the mirror of your songs. The evil I have worked upon this shore, mocking and disturbing the pilgrims, and variously helping Ultramonte when he called up storms for their destruction—and ah! Maraviglia, the last tempest in the clouds and on the sea, that made your way so difficult, was not of nature,—all this,

dear Arnald, I think to repent and to atone: for the rest of my life I will dwell here upon the strand, as a bold and faithful warder, assisting the pilgrimage to Saint Sebastian, as far as may be, in the utmost efforts of my strength. And then, if I entreat the pilgrims to breathe at the same time one little prayer upon the rock above for our mistress Alearda,—I shall, in that also, do the will of God—is it not true, dearest Arnald?"

"In that also you do the will of God,"—re-echoed Arnald, and embraced him warmly. "Oh thou noble, pious Rinaldo! no friend in the world has so truly understood me as yourself, and it seems as if I left behind me my other, my better self, as a victorious proxy on this coast."

Misura now entered the chamber with earnest looks.

"Arm yourselves, dear friends, with the best strengths of mind and body,

The shepherds and fishermen are running together anxiously upon the strand, fearing some new peril from Ultramonte, for, over his dark dwelling lies a thick, — thick cloud, in which red flames are playing and quivering like serpents."

Arnald immediately put on his clothes, and hurried to that part of the country as fast as his painful breast would let him.

" God bless you, brave pilgrims !"— cried the women and children anxiously, —" God bless you, and help us out of this need by your piety and strength."— About stood the men in close throngs, and bowed respectfully to the knights, but without, however, gaining courage to follow them otherwise than singly, and at a distance.

The temple was now visible, and all was as it had been described by Misura. Deep silence reigned within the walls and through the whole circle of the pine-trees. The quivering flames still darted

up and down amongst the deep, dark mass of clouds. The three friends paused.

"Rinaldo!"—said the Troubadour,—"you know these unholy signs from early experience. Is all this merely a lure to entice us?—or can we by advancing do any thing for the safety of the land and the glory of ourselves?"

"Let me first consider,"—replied Rinaldo; and he gazed with fixed eyes upon the mournful spectacle.

On a sudden there arose, in the midst of the cloud, a long straight beam of fire that spread towards the sky; the other flames about it seemed to draw together into a circle and form a writing of horrid import, while the centre blaze more and more shaped itself into a man, but of such a fearful and maddening figure that the three friends closely veiled their faces in their hands and mantles.

When they again looked up, the cloud was scattered by a refreshing breeze

from Saint Sebastian's rock. The morning sun looked down brightly and kindly on the ruins of Ultramonte's dwelling, and gilded the tops of the firs and pine-trees with its lustre.

"He is dead, and has appeared to me,"—said Rinaldo.—"In a dark hour he once promised me that, and bound it with a fearful oath."

Pity was in every bosom, and did away with the last traces of terror and dislike. Sad, but with light and unburthened hearts, the three friends went hand in hand over the blooming meads into the pine-forest, which just before had been an object of such abhorrence.

CHAPTER XV.

In the back-ground of the temple, upon a funeral pile of brushwood, that was wreathed on all sides with garlands of leaves and flowers, lay the exanimated corse of Ultramonte; about it were many strange instruments of magic.

It seemed that he had wished in death to burn himself to ashes, for a torch, but then extinguished, had fallen from his hand upon the pavement, and still single flames and sparks ran crackling here and there amongst the twigs, though each died after the other without effect.—"The poor sinner always had a great predilection for this heathen sort of burial," said Rinaldo.—"Sometimes he would even hint that it would thus be with him as with the phenix, which rises up to heaven from the fire of

death in renovated youth and splendour."

"The wonderful mixture of truth and falsehood," sighed the Minstrel.—"Ah! had he only looked the Hellenic legends fairly and honourably in the face!—they certainly had led him into the track of salvation, and he would then, indeed, have been a renovated phenix, floating upwards to the heavens."

"And will he not arrive at that!"—asked Rinaldo gently—"If not soon, yet at one time in the light of the eternal mercy that always beams upon the soul. Ah, he was often so good! and I know not how I could bear the thought that Ultramonte was for ever damned."

"On this point God gives us no certainty on earth," said Misura sternly.—"Leave to the Lord his office of judge unquestioned, and only strive to keep in the right path that you too may not one day go, whither it is very possible the dark Ultramonte may have gone."

Through the bones of all thrilled the terrors of eternity; in silence they knet on the wonderful couch of the dead.

At last Arnald said to the weeping Rinaldo,—"Courage, dear friend: See! Oh see yonder figures of the cross upon the wall! They must have been scratched upon the stone by the dying Ultramonte, in the last agonies of death, with the fearful sickle that he still grapples in the fingers of his right hand."

"The figure of the cross was not there before,"—exclaimed Rinaldo,—and, smiling with gentle hope, he put away the hair from his tearful eyes.

"Oh what a comfortable promise!" continued Arnald;—"his face too is altogether turned towards it; and in that very action he let fall the destroying torch, and by degrees the wild flames went out by his dying bed."

"Did he not then a short time before his end commit the deed of witchcraft with those clouds?" cried Misura fiercely.—"And did not his soul rise up

from the ruins before our eyes as a fiendish thing of fire?"

"Judge not lest you should be judged," said Arnald with mild earnestness. Upon this Misura was silent, while Rinaldo smiled with augmented hope.—All three prayed fervently and confidently for the repose of the mighty but erring soul; and, amidst pious songs, they let down the weary body into a grave beneath the turf.

On their return they were received with acclamations of joy. After the disappearance of the threatening cloud the inhabitants of the coast had approached close upon the pine-wood, and now shouted praise and honour to the stranger pilgrims, by whose powerful prayers they imagined themselves to have been saved.

Arnald dissipated their error in relating all according to the truth.

"But,"—he added,—"he, who is to protect the pious pilgrims for the future,

and consecrate these hitherto fearful halls to a refuge for the distressed, is this noble knight, once the Marquis of Tagliaduro,—now and henceforth the helpful hermit Emendatus."

He himself knew not how this name had come upon his lips, but he felt as if inspired with it—and so it was with Rinaldo, — and so with all the people. *Te Deum Laudamus* burst from every heart toward the Heavens, and the sunbeams shot down in a path of light over the clear waves to Saint Sebastian's image, which glittered in brilliance as if it had been of gold.

CHAPTER XVI.

EMENDATUS had again entered upon his former dwelling—now ennobled and consecrated by the blessing of a priest as well as by the worthy calling of its inhabitant,—and had taken leave of Arnald and Misura with tears of gratitude. The brave shepherd was richly rewarded for his hospitality and aid by the two knights, who now set out upon their return home, accompanied by the blessings of all the dwellers on the coast.

Arnald went on with cheerful mind, but with a frame so weak that in each day he accomplished a few miles only, and yet was always weary to death when he had reached his nightly quarters. It was with deep, ill-suppressed grief that he was seen by the faithful Misura whom he would often try to console, saying

with a pleasant smile;—"Only let me be once again on mine own ruins of Maraviglia and in the neighbourhood of Castle Bisiers,—and then all my earthly woe will heal of itself."

"Yes, there!"—replied Misura, putting his hand to his eyes,—"There might be at least alleviation for you.—But how are we to get there?"

"A little slowly as it seems,"—answered Arnald, endeavouring to jest as usual. But over his brow, at other times so clear, passed a cloud of languishing desire that was only too conscious of its own futility.

It was thus they discoursed, as they rested on the banks of a stream which flowed clearly and in winding course through the hilly meadows, while Misura tried to cool in its lucid flood the wicker bottles, the noble contents of which were to refresh his friend. To both wanderers the country seemed familiar, but, lost in other thoughts, neither had

found it worth while to express that feeling.

A second pair of pilgrims, in dark vestments, came out from the near vale, who having greeted them shyly but respectfully, likewise sate down upon the turf beside the brook, though at some distance, where they quenched their thirst from the hollow of their hands.

"Why so far off, dear companions?" —said the friendly Arnald. "Like is generally prone to associate with like. And so low down the brook too! It is as if you did not receive the clear stream till it had first served us."

The strangers bowed their heads in earnest assent, as if it could not be otherwise.

"Not so,"—said Arnald,—"And besides we have costly wine here. Come, that we may refresh you with it."

The strangers vehemently expressed their dissent by signs, and again were still.

"Strange!" said Arnald to Misura; "Some strict vow must bind them. Go thither, dear friend.—This calling out somewhat strains me, and at your loud voice they might be frightened,—go thither, and ask them gently and softly whether they will not at least use our cups to draw their water."

Misura did as his friend desired. But no sooner had he come before the strangers than the one cried with anxious voice;—"Jesu!—The great gigantic man!"—and folded himself in his garments.

"Don't be a child," said Misura angrily. "There are larger people in the world than myself, but none who mean it better with the distressed.—I do not even except my companion yonder, for his intents are the same precisely: be rational therefore and come to us. Or, if you may not do that for your vow, nor receive any assistance whatsoever from us,—not even our goblet for a water-

scoop,—nor even speak,—inform me by a sign of it, but do it immediately, for I want to refresh my exhausted companion with the wine. In confidence be it said,—but don't let him perceive it,—if you drink no wine, I shall like you all the better, for that is my Arnald's best refreshment, and we have now some of a particularly good kind that I shall not get again so soon. Now, will you come, or not? and will you drink, or not?"

"Do with us as you please," replied the pilgrim who had cried out before. "No vow binds us."

With this he gave his hand to his companion, who arose, sighing heavily, and both followed Misura with downcast heads.

"There they are," said the latter to Arnald. "They may speak but not drink wine. You may credit that beforehand."

"How so, unless you have distinctly asked them?"—replied the Minstrel in

rising anger, and turning round to the pilgrim, who was apparently the youngest, he said!—"How is it? Have you forsworn wine upon your journey? Remember, that the slightest falsehood injures man before God, not a thankful enjoyment of food and drink. You are more, much more exhausted than myself.—Have you forsworn wine?"

"We drink not wine," said the elder with a hoarse voice, from under his deep hat."

"Your companion though may need it,"—replied Arnald; nor would he desist, till by mild entreaty and earnest representation he had pressed upon the pilgrim nearly a goblet full of the noble liquor. The youth then rose like a flower refreshed by the dews, indescribably touching as he gazed upon the heaven with his large black eyes from out his pallid visage. He lisped out a few words of gratitude, and sank down to repose upon the turf; by him knelt his com-

panion with whom he carried on a low and earnest conversation.

During this Misura stood aside, muttering angrily to himself;

"He will go on preaching till he has preached all his wine into their mouths, and keep no drop to moisten his tongue when he has talked it dry."—

"No, Misura,"—laughed the Minstrel;—"it shall not go so far as that; you know I myself am fond of this heavenly gift. And as a proof,—there—see!"

He filled the goblet and emptied it at a draught. But when Misura still remained in discontented silence, he continued;

"Do you not perceive too that the youngest of the two pilgrims is a woman, without doubt a stranger to all necessity and the toils of travel."

"Fool that I was, not to see it before!"—exclaimed Misura, so loudly that the pilgrims started back in terror

without comprehending the purport of his words, and from this time he was nobly attentive to her slightest wishes. So much the more was he dissatisfied with her companion, who would not be persuaded by Arnald to drink, but who looked upon the earth sad and gloomily as if reckless of all the world; at last he said;

"Though you do not otherwise take a pleasure in speaking, you will yet perhaps tell us where we may find the nearest hospitable castle. We have deviated from the high road, the evening darkens, and a good couch were desirable for my friend."

"Scarcely a thousand paces hence lies the noblest castle in the land, and, in gratitude for your kindness and hospitality, we will readily guide you thither. You must not, however, be surprized, if we suddenly come upon a wilder country, for the strange fancy of the antient lord built this castle in the

midst of woods and mountains. Do you see that rocky beech-grove? This brook springs from it, and thither we must go."

"Tut! Tut! Don't make so many words about it,"—replied Misura.—"We have seen worse things than your rock, and got off from them too. Let us on—if indeed, it will not be too toilsome to your companion."

But the pilgrim, whom they imagined to be a woman, had already sprung up, and with visible delight went on so fast that Misura was often forced to beg she would moderate her pace, as Arnald's exhausted breast throbbed laboriously in ascending the mountain side.

In truth the rock and the forest looked down awfully and mysteriously upon the wanderers, as if telling a fearful tale of the events of early times. Single crosses, towering on the heights, and often placed close by the narrow foot-path, seemed to preserve the me-

mory of the unfortunate or the murdered. All seemed mysterious and yet at the same time so strangely familiar!—only that Arnald and Misura could not remember when and where, upon their outward journey, they had trod these groves; it was, however, probable that it now looked quite otherwise in the full attire of its green leaves, than it had done before when stiff with frost and ice.

Soon a knightly castle appeared on the other side of a gaping abyss, that was made passable by two trees thrown over it; the walls were splendidly illumined by the last beams of the evening sun.

"Man!"—cried Misura, and seized the elder pilgrim by the shoulder,—"Man! I almost believe that is the castle of the Marquis Raymond."

The stranger signed assent.

"And you are his good friend, as it appears to me?"

A similar token of affirmation.

"Silent traitor, you have, however, betrayed yourself!"—cried the indignant Misura, forcing down the pilgrim on a rock, by the way side, which was also distinguished by a cross. "Is it not true that we were to sleep as the murdered one below?—such was the will of the Marquis Raymond!—Was it not so?"

The pilgrim sighed, and was silent.

But his female companion knelt down before Misura, and lifted up her hands together in lamentation, while the shadowing hat dropt off, and the flowing black air confirmed Arnald's earlier supposition.—"Spare him!"—she prayed in flute-like tones—"Oh! spare him—my life the pledge, he has now nothing evil in his mind."

And releasing him, Misura said;—"Yes, I must, indeed, Lady, if you wish it."

"I am an unfortunate exile," sighed the stranger. "End my life, if you

choose it,—it is in some measure forfeit to you, though not exactly for any thing to-day—and you will do me therein a real service. It was a childish terror that fell on me at the brook, before the anger of my judge;—But take care of this woman."

"Do we look like those who murder the defenceless?" cried Arnald indignantly—"For the rest, your strange speeches are a mystery to me."

"You know me not?"

"No; nor the lady either."

"Ah! Maraviglia! In your heart such terrors could not dwell as those which were burnt into mine by the image of yourself and your mighty friend."

"Let that pass for the present,"—said the female pilgrim,—"and take compassion on our misery. We hoped that you would speak for us with the castle-lord, and obtain for us his grace and favour. We have been driven

thence into the wild world, and know not a place of refuge."

"You have chosen a couple of excellent ambassadors for your cause," said Misura, laughing,—"What we offer there is likely to meet an admirable reception!"

"Oh! yes,"—replied the female pilgrim,—"you do not know,"—

She was silent, and looked down in tears.

"Come what will!"—cried Arnald,—"A distressed and helpless woman weeps; there is no room for hesitation. All of you, follow me."

And bravely struggling with the giddiness, excited by the steep abyss, he past quickly and vigorously over the trunk of the tree, that joined the two sides, and happily reached the opposite border. Misura, who did not yet wholly trust the pilgrims, remained close behind him to ward off all attempts

at treachery. The female and her companion followed slowly after.

They again stood together, and Arnald requested to know what had really driven the strangers from the castle, or what was their desire. Upon this the female looked at the harp with an imploring eye, and when, with ready grace, he had given it to her, she sate down upon the rock, and with sweet voice sang this song to the music of its strings:

"Our couch with purple once was spread,
Our drink was of the sparkling wine;
But now we find a wanderer's bed,
On heaths where purple wild flowers shine,
And quench our weary thirst at eve
From rills that seem like us to grieve.

"Such pilgrimage befits the knight,
No less than battle's darker hour;
But tell me, warriors, is it right,
That beauty's pale and shrinking flow'r,
Should couch upon the winter's snow,
With storms above and wilds below?

"Too oft, indeed, has evil cast
Its shadows on our way of life;
But who can say that he hath past
Unstained in this earthly strife,
Let many an hour of tears atone,
For evil thought and evil done."

"And if that will not move you,"—she concluded—"I have nothing more to say; for in truth, according to strict justice, we have not deserved compassion."

"I promise you both my help and pity," answered Arnald;—"Only let me know what I am to do for you with the castle-lord, supposing always that he grants me a hearing."

"I will explain it to you in enigma," replied the pilgrim,—and remained in silent thought. But, suddenly looking up, and then listening anxiously towards the wood, that already began to darken, she exclaimed;

"Help, Heaven! he comes himself! The castle-lord comes!"—And, like

flying roes, she and her companion vanished into the thicket.

"We are not to run too,"—said Misura laughing.

"God forbid!—although I do not by any means reckon upon a pleasant meeting."

And both stood still, leaning quietly on their pilgrim-staves.

CHAPTER XVII.

The joyful sound of horns echoed through the valley, from which there came a cavalcade, whose bright arms glittered like flames through the darkness. On their nearer approach many prisoners were visible, who followed the knight on his return home, in fetters.

"He seems to go on in his old way;"—whispered Misura indignantly to Arnald.

"Let us wait the end," replied the Minstrel calmly. "If our good word help not, we may perhaps find some other mode of aid, for returning pilgrims are more closely allied to the knightly world, than those who are setting out."

Misura nodded his head in assent.

"You know your commission," said

the knight to his warriors, and accompanied by several squires he entered the castle gates with friendly greetings. Those, who remained behind, formed a circle about the prisoners.

"Do you acknowledge yourselves,"—said the captain, "as those who have sworn fidelity to my liege-lord in all good and honourable things?"

A trembling, conscious "*Yes*" was the answer.

"Can you deny that you were out upon evil ways, opening the doors afresh to the old system of villainy and plunder? Can you deny it? Or has any one ought to bring forward in his justification?"

A timid and universal "*No*" was heard. Many knelt down and prayed in visible anguish for a happy end.

The captain now said; "God be praised that my liege has no need to fear you. For this time you have only seen his power; at the next offence you will experience the unrelenting severity

of justice. Go home, and live as beseems good vassals, who not only fear and honour their feudal lord, but love him and his associates."

At a signal from him the chains of the prisoners were taken off, and as they past by him with thanks for his mercy, he gave to each in the name of his knight a few gold pieces, to refresh themselves and their families after their recent terror. The vassals then went down into the valley praising their lord, while the others returned with joyful songs into the castle.

"The Marquis must be very much altered," said Arnald;—"and our former admonition must have penetrated his heart. Did he not seem to you more graceful,—I might say youthful,—than at the time of our first meeting?"

"I scarce know how to answer you fitly. One moment I could say *no*, the other *yes* — almost as the prisoners answered; only—for which God

be praised,—by no means in so piteous a tone. But caution has never yet done harm, and now it is for me to use your saying of, 'let us wait the end.'"

They soon found the chapel, known to them from their former visit, and, again seating themselves under its holy roof, they looked thence toward the windows of the hall that glittered with the wax lights.

A cheerful sound of flutes and violins echoed through the halls. It was easy to see that there was a dance within.

"They are again exceedingly gay here," said Misura sternly.

"Well, well!" replied Arnald in excuse—"What is there to blame in that? A brave knight may surely hold a festival, after such a deed of victory and gentleness."

"Yes, if he have not so much on the score as this Marquis Raymond. It would be well for him, if he would remain a little serious just at present, and not make such a public rejoicing

for having accomplished one honourable action."

In the meantime a knight in splendid garments appeared at the window, and about him were several servants who seemed to ask his commands. It could not be doubted, that it was the lord of the the castle. No sooner had he dismissed the servants with their orders than two youthful females approached him, the one tasting and presenting his wine, the other leaning in familiar grace upon his arm, as if exhausted by the dance.

"Two instead of one!" — muttered Misura—"A fine conversion truly!"

"She with the raven locks,"—said Arnald—"who before stood by him at the window, is not there now."

"He has grown weary of her and driven her away," replied Misura.—"By Heavens, Arnald! it bursts upon me like the fire-flame in a dark night! Our female pilgrim is no other than that fearful maid with the raven locks."

Arnald gave a thoughtful assent, and Misura continued, laughing wildly;

"An excellent commission we are upon! to reconcile the runaway to her infamous master, and procure a good reception for her gallant into the bargain: for, it was most probably he who accompanied her, and she has perhaps given the castle lord good reasons for her ejection."

"Still, Misura! Still!—In me awakes another, and much more worthy foreboding."

"Oh yes,—I believe it well. Such are you minstrels!—ever in the clouds, ever with pure perfection about you!—It is enough to make one mad that you are not able to open your eyes;—and when the truth falls upon your breast with a weight of lead, which is no longer to be denied, then you raise a lament that the world has most cunningly deceived you."

"It is enough, Misura. You seem

to yourself no doubt very wise in this moment, and, if this proceeded from a man of common kind, I should give myself no farther trouble, or at most forbid his talking, and with joy stake my blood on it that I made good my word. But you, Misura, you! — Oh no, you friendly soul!—speak not the language, with which worldly men try to embitter to poets their heavenly talent, and make them do penance for their elevation by driving them out of the real world, upon the principle that no mime nor juggler can enter into an honourable fraternity. Think upon my ancestor, the Minstrel-King. He could strike the harp-strings, but he could also strike with the sword, and you well know that to these faculties belongs at the same time the faculty of penetration."

Misura pressed his friend's hand, and with shame replied;—"I will not another time do so.—Ah! I have again been too warm!" and they embraced each other with brotherly affection.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The knight had vanished from the window, but in the castle all yet looked bright and cheerful, and the rooms yet echoed with the gay music of the dance. And now a side-door of the building was heard to jar, from which a female figure advanced, in long modest vestments, with a little lamp in her hand. She bowed respectfully to the strangers, and said; "The castle-lord invites you to his hearth. Through the window he saw you here in the wild night, and it is not his custom to revel in banquet, while poor pilgrims lie close to his walls beneath the freezing canopy of heaven."

Arnald and Misura bowed undecidedly to the delicate apparition.

"Lady," said the Troubadour, after a pause,—"we have been once before invited into this castle, and then did well in our refusal. I know not rightly whether it would be more prudent in us to enter it to-day."

The stranger answered kindly—"Holy pilgrims, it is my brother Godfrey, who, according to his wonted custom, has allowed me the pleasure of coming out to you, and since he has dwelt here none have repented that they visited his halls. What happened before, it does not become me to judge of, and scarce, indeed, to mention."

"Godfrey of Montalban!" said the astonished Misura.

"The same," replied the lady—"I have the honour to be his sister, and am called Clementine of Montalban."

"Oh, my Minstrel! How clearly and keenly have your eyes seen! and how dully mine!" exclaimed Misura; and at the same moment the light of the lamp

fell upon Arnald's features. At the sight of the Troubadour, Clementine forgot all ceremony and broke out into a loud cry of joy—"Messire Maraviglia! Messire Maraviglia!"

It was probable that Godfrey did not hear the words correctly and mistook them for a cry of distress, as he rushed out from the castle with the speed of an arrow, in his left hand a burning torch, in his right a glittering sword. But he soon understood what was going forward, and bowing in glad emotion, said;

"Oh, you may no longer conceal from us who you are, my knightly pilgrim! And if I have found favour in your sight, let me not rise from the ground until you have bestowed upon me the sign of knighthood with your honourable right hand. I would not hitherto receive it from any, hoping that you would one day vouchsafe to me that honour."

At the same time he sank upon his knee, and placed his naked sword in the

hand of the Minstrel, who, deeply moved, invested him with the same noble gift which he had himself received from the Viscount on the coast of Provence.

"May the ancestors of thy great race be with thee! and also the ancestors of the race of Maraviglia, which now is approaching fast to its extinction!"

With this he embraced the new knight, and all entered the castle in earnest joyfulness.

Honorine and a splendid circle of dames and noble warriors now greeted their appearance with the warmest satisfaction, and the news of Godfrey's knighthood increased the pleasure of the evening. However modest, and almost punctilious, the whole might be, yet the open gaiety, then native to all Frankish lands, showed itself most delightfully. There was many a jest, many a tale, and much laughter, and each heard the other with as much

pleasure as if himself were speaking; no one thought to press forward, but all were contented with the delight and honour of belonging to the circle.

In a graver moment Godfrey related how the Minstrel by his romance of Reinald had awaken him from his dreamy life in the little castle; and Arnald entreated him to let them know the manner of his acquiring the present honourable fortune.

Godfrey in youthful modesty cast down his eyes, and said; "I do not well know how I should begin to speak of the happy result, which God has granted to me so much beyond my merit."

"Let me take care of that," said a venerable old warrior, who had before made himself known to the Troubadour as a near relation of the race of Vergi, and thus he began his story;

"This young heroic scion of Montalban thought to travel into far-off lands, there under a foreign name to gain a fortune, that might justify him in openly

avowing his great forefathers. But a fairer lot was destined him; for here, in his native land, he was attacked with shameful mockery by the wild Marquis Raymond, the former possessor of this castle and the dread of the country, who thought he could easily subdue the unpractised warrior. Ha! he did not know how the old blood of heroes can boil in youthful veins. Godfrey flung him so rudely from the saddle, that he lay motionless upon the sand. But then the unknightly servants of the Marquis fell upon the conqueror, and, though he struck two of them dead, they yet overmastered him at last, and dragged him into this castle. Raymond would have beheaded him, but a dame of lofty birth, who had lived for years in unseemly nearness with the Marquis,—I will therefore only call her by her Christian name, Odalinde,—now became enamoured of the youthful hero; as the Marquis was weary of his paramour, he offered her in marriage to

him, and, with her, freedom and two of his castles, provided one of the fair dames of Montalban would ennoble the Marquis by the grant of her hand. You may guess what our Godfrey answered—the day after he stood upon the scaffold. Here he reproached the castle-lord and his companions so sharply, and sparkled so fiercely on them with the burning eyes of his race, that all stood as if fixed by magic. Nay, while the Marquis hastened to the assistance of the fainting Odalinde, he boldly commanded one of the horsemen to unloose his bonds—and the man obeyed. Godfrey then took the sword from his side, and quietly passed out of the castle through the midst of the crowds, who gave way to him on all sides.

"By this time Raymond had recovered himself, and would have had his prisoner back. Much too late! With the speed and fire of the lightning, our young Montalban rushed through the country, calling us to honour and revenge, and at

his breath the spark in every bosom burst out into flames. At the head of our league he fought like his great ancestor, Reinald, and conquered in three bloody battles, upon which Raymond fled with Odalinde from our revenge into the wild world, but no one can learn whither. Godfrey was then of right the feudal lord over all the lands and castles of the ejected tyrant; how he discharges his office, you have yourself seen with your own eyes."

"My noble Montalban!" cried Arnald—"But where is the faithful Robert? And what did he say to his glorious master?"

"When the knights," said Godfrey gently,—"when the knights accompanied me home with the clamour of triumph he—died for joy."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE tears, which rose in Godfrey's eyes at the last words, called up the same water into the eyes of those about him. For a long time all were silent in deep emotion.

At length the grey-headed warrior spoke thus;—"In the name of the good old Robert I announce to you that you do him the best service when you dwell together in holy joy as before. According to all probability I shall be the first of this company who will rejoin the faithful soul, and believe me that I will then answer to him for what I now have taken upon myself. For the present, it would be best that you sang some pleasant legend to your harp, Sir Arnald of Maraviglia."

"Then you will hear something of earnest import," replied Arnald,—"for such is the present feeling of my mind. But perhaps you may thus find the return to your former cheerfulness so much the easier."

With this he struck full and wild accords upon his harp, and sang to it the following romance:

"When death has snapp'd the links which bind
The body to the endless mind,
Oh! fearful then the judgement hour
To spirits at the throne of pow'r!
But oft those judgements fearful show
In imag'd truth to life below.
'Tis thus beneath the castle wall
Two outcasts mourn for hearth and hall.
Seek'st Raymond, once the high, the bold?
You'll find the outcast on the wold,
Fierce as the storm, and pale as those
In whom the blood no longer flows.
Seek'st Odalinde, once so gay
In beauty's pride, and life of May?
You'll find her in the pathless plains,
Beaten by winds, and drench'd with rains.
May Heaven wake the slumb'ring blaze
Of conscience o'er their darkling ways,

For now close by them yawns the deep,
Where souls in endless torture weep."

Each looked inquiringly at the other in terror, when Arnald drew tones from his lyre, that were sweet beyond expression:

"Raymond! Raymond! Wherefore fly
Through the dark and pathless wild?
Odalinde! beauty's child,
Wherefore to the tempest sigh?
Pity weeps,—return from night,
To the castle's banquet-light.

"Come!—The victor's ire will cease
At the voice of humble pray'r,
At the tears of sad despair.
Hark! these accents promise peace,
And these lights in friendship burn—
Raymond! Odalind! return."

"Noble Maraviglia, you have spoken from my own heart," replied Godfrey,—"and if I knew where to find the poor penitents,—"

He broke off, for the light tinkling of a harp was heard from the chapel, and

two imploring voices sang to its tones these words;

"Here we shiver in the tempest,
By your chapel's nighted walls;—
We who twin'd our hair with garlands
Once in pleasure's sparkling halls.

"Heaven's wrath is sore upon us
For the days of evil past;
But all earthly woe must finish—
Death finds every one at last.

"'Come!'—a voice gently murmur'd
From yon halls, with music's breath;—
They, who pity others' sorrow,
Holy is their hour of death."

The gentle kinsfolks hastened from the hall to meet the penitents, and Misura accompanied them, a lofty torch of wax in his right hand. Arnald in his present state of weakness was unable to follow; he seated himself therefore at the window with his lyre upon his arm, and played out into the night a divine melody full of comfort and consolation.

Raymond and Odalinde knelt with

broken heart before their judges, giving themselves up entirely to their disposal—mild, or severe—as it might be. Upon this Godfrey said; "when sinful man does thus before our heavenly Father, he finds forgiveness;—how then with such moving humility should he not find it from a sinful brother?"

From this moment the only talk was of what might be most agreeable to Raymond and Odalinde, as far as was consistent with morality and the service of God. For the present they entreated that they might find subsistence in some one of the castle farms, far away from society and shame. They wished, moreover, to be united in a few days, then to lead a solitary life on one of the estates of Godfrey.

"Good people," said the young friendly hero,—"as far as I can understand the matter, it seems best that Raymond should go into a cloister, and Odalinde into a nunnery. But perhaps you

are not sufficiently rife in penitence and holiness for that, and therefore let it be according to your wishes."

When the knight returned with his sisters into the hall and gave a relation of what had happened, there were some who accused him of imprudence in allowing the fearful Raymond to live in freedom so near the castle. But Godfrey looked smilingly around him with the lofty heroism of a Montalban, and said, —"I think that I have done after the will of the Lord, who therefore is my shield against all evil; next to him my good right and my good sword."

As he thus spoke the sisters stood in pious trust about their valiant brother,—like slender lilies about a knightly image, —and testified by their confiding smiles that they too belonged to the exalted race of Montalban.

CHAPTER XX.

The next morning, when Arnald was about to continue his journey, he found waiting for him in the castle-court a beautiful milk-white mule, provided with every requisite for travel. Godfrey and his sisters entreated him to accept it at their hands as a hospitable gift. "Take it, dear friend," said Misura,—"I beseech you, take it. Would you hurt this young hero and these noble ladies by a haughty denial? Besides, your vow is absolved, you are returning home, and may else die from weariness before you again see the towers of Castle Blaiers and the venerable ruins of Maraviglia!"

Arnald bowed gratefully to his generous hosts, and received the silver-worked bridle from the hands of Cle-

mentine and her sister. The noble animal seemed familiar to him, and after some thought he recollected that it had oft been ridden by the brave Lanzarossa, the chief who was swept away by the Grecian fire at the storming of the Moorish trenches in Provence. Godfrey had purchased it of an old squire who two years before fought against Tarfe under the Viscount Bisiers; the man had made over to him the beautiful animal, which was a bequest from his captain, that it might be the better taken care of.

"If God so pleases, he shall not want fitting care with me either," said Arnald, leaning upon the neck of the friendly animal, in deep emotion at the thought of his gallant comrade. And now he swung himself into the saddle—ah! no longer so quickly and readily as he had been wont, for the sick breast was drawn together in scanty respiration,—then greeted the noble Montalban, and rode slowly off, with the joyful Misura by his side.

Their journey was swift and happy. On a beautiful summer-evening they saw the copper-covered towers of Castle Bisiers, glittering from afar, but Arnald yet bridled his longing for the aspect of his mistress, and struck into a cross-road towards Saint Anne's cloister, that he might first be wholly absolved from his vow by his dear Abbot Altarbol. They passed the night in a quiet little village, and reached the minster in the middle of the following day.

With tears of joy Altarbol advanced to meet the Troubadour, telling him how sweetly Alearda's child had bloomed again, but when he saw a feverish flush only upon his darling's cheek instead of the wonted crimson, the bitter drops of sorrow fell fast from his aged eyes.

Soon, however, he repressed this feeling, and gave praises to the Lord that for the present at least his Arnald was restored to him; he then led him to the church, where he solemnly took off the

pilgrim garb, placed upon his head a knightly cap waving with splendid feathers, and girded him anew with the good sword so well proved on the Provençal strand, and which for the time he had taken into his keeping.

" Arnald !" said Misura, " You were a noble pilgrim, and a valiant one to boot, but I cannot conceal from you, that you look ten times better in the habiliments of knighthood. And now, reverend Sir, be pleased in mercy to draw me too out of these robes that are somewhat circumstantial and helpless."

It was done as he desired, after which Altarbol requested the two knights to refresh themselves in his cell with food and wine—" For you, my good Arnald," he added,—" for you I have a peculiar cordial."

And as they entered the room, there beamed upon them from its wall an image of the Madonna, large as life, on a sparkling ground of gold; such was its

exceeding loveliness that the invisible seemed by a wonder to have become visible, and the two friends sank upon the knee full of sweet faith, but dazzled as if by an immediate vision of the Queen of Heaven. She resembled no earthly beauty in all the world,—not even the purest; it was she, whom God had chosen and glorified above all the daughters of Eve for her piety and humbleness.

Rising up again from prayer, Arnald said, "Oh the too happy painter, to whose pure soul this vision has been revealed!"

"God hath worked wonders in my feebleness," said a voice full of well-known melody,—and behind Arnald stood a knight Templar in the white mantle of his order, with the great blood-red cross upon his breast. It was Sebastian.

The first transports of reunion were mild and silent in these noble spirits; they were besides tempered by the nearness

of the holy image and by the appearance of Maraviglia's altered features, that, now pale as death, now glowing with the flush of fever, announced the approaching hour of final separation. The light but hot pricking in his breast awoke the same prophetic feeling in himself.

"But tell me, dear Sebastian," said Arnald, after the first burst of silent joy, —"tell me how it fell out that you received this blessed revelation?"

And Altarbol placed bread and wine upon the table, and all sate down, on which Sebastian began his story thus;

"My dear friend and master, I should like to tell you all as it has happened, but I trust we shall remain long together, and then it will gradually appear from many a song, from many a painting. For the present take all I am able to give in the joy and grief of this reunion. It is still something.

"I had seen many, many beautiful Madonnas in my various pilgrimages

through church and cloister. Each had some one single feature of the Eternal Mistress, but none was the perfect image of my heart. I would much rather have painted the lofty Countess Alearda in praise of the holy Virgin than any of those which pretended to be representations of the glorified Queen of Heaven. Still I felt that Alearda was not it; Alearda was a messenger of Heaven, but she, before whom all the bands of heaven inclined, must be another.

"A dream came over me,—at the time I served the order as a faithful knight, but had not yet taken its cross,—a dream came over me;—a tall, veiled figure glided to the watch-fire where I slumbered, and a flute-like voice sang into mine ear, 'That is she!' I stretched my hands out imploringly after the figure, but could only repeat the words, 'O lovely sun! Dear, brilliant sun!—Oh, beaming sun, disperse the clouds!'—The figure bent down over my left breast,

and, when she saw no symbols of the order, she moved her head in mild denial. I wept like a child, and sighing exclaimed,—'How am I to become a Temple-knight, who am so little able to distinguish myself?' Upon this the figure pointed to the mountains which lay to the north of us, and I awoke from sleep. An irresistible impulse drove me to follow this direction. I saddled my good horse in silence, and forth I rode.

"As I approached the mountains, I saw arms glittering in the moonshine amongst the palms and cedars. The Saracen army was advancing. Their spies had observed me too in the clear night, and I had to stand a hard battle. God was with me—I fought my way through, and came back bleeding into the camp, which I immediately awoke with the sound of my horn and the cry of battle. I, who was the least surprised, succeeded in collecting the first bands and leading them quickly against the enemy. We obtained a com-

plete victory; the order of the cross was offered to me, and with thanks to God and the holy Virgin I entered into the noble brotherhood.

"On the night when I watched my arms,—Oh, Arnald, words fail me here,—I know not whether it was the delirium of fancy,—but I have ever since borne the image of the Virgin so clearly and brightly in my heart, that it often is to me as if I saw her with my bodily eyes, and since I have been here, detained by a mission from my order, it has happened by exceeding grace that the colours and features were present to me, and there stands the image."

After a pause the Prior said; "You know how I long ago foreboded that this youth would one day be a great light of our Church. Oh! that is now most gloriously proved, though in a far different way from what I then supposed in my purblind wisdom."

"And once," added the Minstrel—

" when I stood in George's paternal castle with our Sebastian, he cried out on the sudden; 'Arnald! Arnald! I believe the morning twilight is already rising in thin streaks upon the mountains. Oh let us hasten to leave these gloomy halls.'—The strange words then refreshed me in an unintelligible manner, and have ever since been constantly in my mind. Now they are clear to me; now the light streaks have become to him a sun; now he has left the dark halls far behind him, and many will behold that sun with him in his shining path, when he and all of us have mouldered in our mortal parts to dust, and even our names have perished."

CHAPTER XXI.

THE soft evening beams played upon the garden trellice-work of Castle Bisiers, and within sported with the grass, and the flowers, and the shadow of the trees. Songs, odours, and May-sprouts, arose on all sides towards the heavens, when Maraviglia entered the beloved ground with Altarbol and his Sebastian. Misura had gone out upon an excursion, "For," —he said,—"with all the joy of this day I am somewhat tearful, and that sits strangely on me, and then I am not very intelligible to people, least of all to women."

Several of the castle inhabitants now came up the alley, that was overshadowed by the venerable trees. Arnald well knew who was at their head, and his breath grew

short, his knees tottered;—his companions would have held him up by the arm, but he said to them,—"Joy, which can so wonderfully exhaust, can also wonderfully strengthen."—And he walked on cheerfully as if raised upon invisible wings,—as if inspired by sounds of victory, that he only could understand.

Alearda stood before him, her child leaning upon her hand, and surrounded by her women, who bowed in reverence to the visitors.

"See, Bertha," she exclaimed, "that is the good knight Arnald of Maraviglia, who has invented so many beautiful songs and tales,—and for you has done much more, infinitely more, as you will one day learn, when God has blest you with riper thought and understanding."

The child threw kisses and flowers to the Minstrel, crying—"Thanks for your lovely songs! Thanks for your lovely stories!" but again she turned to her mother, and said; "I thought the dear

Arnald of Maraviglia must always bloom like the roses in my garden,—and now he is so pale! so very pale!"

Pearly drops glittered in Alearda's eyes; at the same moment the Viscount came from a near alley, kissed the Troubadour, and said;

"Though it may cost you your life, you have yet gained a victory,—a fairer one than which I cannot boast."

To assure himself whether he waked or dreamt, the happy Arnald gazed around him; the glittering trellice-work of the garden and the deep evening red in heaven encompassed this moment of his life as if with a precious frame of gold.

Oh! that it were allowed to the author of this history to circle his present picture likewise with lines of the purest gold, as it once was granted to the poets of other times in the most prophetic and loveliest portions of their writings!

CHAPTER XXII.

It has been often said that a slow wasting disease of the body must press heavily upon the soul, which sees its departure from the friendly world approach step by step, and counts as it were the leaves of bloom which drop one after the other. Where, however, no distorting pains interfere, and where the departing one does not love too much that which is called life, nor hate too much that which is called death, it may not be so bad as is imagined. If we drink the last flask of a noble wine with a pleasure which we did not know before, why not also these last drops of the earthly being? In thus quietly gliding downwards we meet with few of the cares and shocks of this lower world; we have little more to do than to pluck its flowers; a foretaste of the

disembodied state is breathing round us: those who love us have more thought and more affection for the departing one; and those who do not love us, we more lightly and easily pardon, regardful of the text,—"Forgive, as we would be forgiven,"—as well as mindful of the short time which we have to pilgrimage together; and where a tear flows from the eye, it flows almost visibly as pearl-seed into the life of Paradise. Whoever has experienced such gentle suffering, will not deny us his assent—at all events it was truly so with Arnald.

Slowly,—slowly,—he marched towards the grave, and yet he still saw a few changes of the seasons. At this period many lovely songs and legends blossomed in his fancy,—sometimes of a more brilliant and joyful import than any he could invent in the days of his perfect vigour. Often too would Lanzarossa's snow-white mule bear him with gentle pace to Castle Bisiers, and when his sick breast pre-

vented his reading, Alcarda herself would take his poems in her tender hands, and animate the words with her sweet and solemn voice. Sebastian, now seldom journeying far, and always brought back to this spot by the commissions of his order, sent the mild beams of his spirit most refreshingly into the soul of his friend, and painted for him amongst other things a crucifixion of the Lord. It was fixed upon a rock; around it hovering angels, who lovingly received in vases the blood of the holy wounds; below were a hermit reading and two knights with lofty banners at their side,—the one fearfully severe and rugged,—the other, youthful and of angelic beauty, glittering in golden armour. If at times the hereditary fire would blaze up in Arnald, he had only to look upon this mysterious image, and however little he was able to express its meaning in words, it was yet written glowingly in his heart, and in his darker hours those figures held out

light after light for him towards the land beyond the grave.

It again inclined towards the autumn, so dearly loved and so often sung by Arnald, when one morning Sebastian hastily entered the little farm, and immediately hurried into the Minstrel's chamber; beneath the mantle of his order he wore complete mail, in his hand was the lofty helmet, and his gentle features were lit up by the holy flame of battle.—"War, dear friend and master,"—he exclaimed with a cheerful smile;—"A Moorish fleet appears upon the coast. The Viscount sets out immediately, and entreats that you, in the meantime, will comfort and protect Alearda at Castle Bisieva."

A dark red flushed over Arnald's cheeks.—"Is there then no sword left for me?"—in a moment he had girded on his good weapon, exclaiming: "—It is, indeed, sweet to comfort noble women, but it is sweeter to die for them on the battle field of victory!"

"But, Arnald, your exhausted breast."

"It is very near to the shore, dear Sebastian; and what nobler fate could meet this bosom than to pour out its expiring strength for Alearda? Besides it is now the reign of my sweet, my golden autumn, who will also bring me a sweet and a golden end?"

"But you can no longer ride and manage the war-horse, gallant Arnald,—not even for a single hour."

"That we will see."

And immediately he was beyond the door and beckoned to the farmer, who led Sebastian's horse, to come forward with the fiery creature.—"It is so difficult to be mounted, dear Arnald,"—exclaimed Sebastian warningly,—but, in his eagerness for battle, Maraviglia heard no more. In a instant he laid the bridle on the neck and set his foot in the stirrup, when the wild horse snorted, and with his fore feet angrily tore up the ground. Sebastian, hurrying to him,

carefully appeased the noble animal, and at length Arnald got into the saddle with dignified carriage, although slowly, and almost exhausted by the effort. When he was fairly mounted, he smiled and would have spoken, but his sick breast panted violently and denied him words. At the same moment the angry horse tore himself from Sebastian and the farmer, and with wild plunges rushed out of the court. Both anxiously looked after the Troubadour with folded hands; but he soon recovered from the exertion of mounting, and put in practice every knightly art with dexterity and courage. The noble horse, too, soon found out the power that governed him, and cheerfully obeyed it. Arnald galloped in triumph, waving his sword as he passed his steed through every sort of warlike evolution. Then again he retreated to a distance, and, having gained space for the most rapid charge, he called out jestingly with all the earlier

strength of his battle-cry — "Now for it!—Upon them!"—And on he dashed with the sword above his head. Close by Sebastian he pulled in the horse with hand and thigh so vigorously, that it stopped as if rooted to the earth; but, in the same moment, the knight tottered in the saddle, pale as death, the sword sank down in his enfeebled grasp, and when the fiery animal again began to rage, he murmured with voice that was hardly audible; — "Now, Sebastian, hold him!"—His friend did as he requested, and the Minstrel fell senseless into the arms of Sebastian and the farmer.

On coming to himself again, he wept bitterly,—"It will not do!"—he sighed, and hid his head upon Sebastian's bosom.

The latter consoled him with his wonted calmness, bidding him remember the knight was yet a warrior who could command in Castle Bisiers, and more,—protect his noble mistress; and this

office Arnald could undertake with his clear sight and unshaken courage, without any impediment from his broken strength. Arnald acquiesced with humbled spirit, and rode up slowly on his friendly mule to Castle Bisiers. When, however, Sebastian's steed at times made such plunges under his nervous rider that the mail both of man and horse rang again—oh! then the tears would force themselves into Arnald's eye, and his friend, under some pretext, would turn away that he might hide the moisture in his own.

CHAPTER XXIII.

On the following day the Viscount and his knights were assembled in the great hall of Castle Bisiers; there they waited for the ambassador then announced on the part of the Moors, who was to explain the reasons that brought this strange fleet to the coasts of Provence. Above, in a splendid gallery, that ran round the hall, stood the Countess Alearda with her women, in brilliant attire, and at the side of his mistress, Arnald of Maraviglia, as the chosen defender of the Castle.

The folding-doors flew open. Amidst the deafening clang of trumpets, cymbals, and tambourines, there entered a rich train of Moorish knights who passed through the hall with respectful greeting, and then placed themselves opposite to the Viscount in a glittering squadron.

But who can describe the general astonishment when the ambassador himself entered, splendidly arrayed in gold and silver, blazing most wonderfully in his gorgeous arms,—and it was no other than Gryba, who, in these very halls, had been changed to George by the waters of the holy baptism!

At a sign from him the clang of the Moorish instruments was hushed. He bowed to the Viscount with arms crossed upon his breast, and was about to speak, when the latter interrupted him.

"Sir Knight, you must first above all things let me know by what name I am to call you in this business,—whether George or Gryba. If you should wish to be again called Gryba, I, on my side, should request from your general another envoy."

"My general," — said the Moor laughing and resting on his sabre,— "my general can send no better envoy than myself, for I am he who lead the whole squadron, which now is lying

upon your coast. But, dear Prince and master in arms, how could you suppose that I should bear any name but George, or come otherwise than in love, friendship, and gratitude?"

With this he sent a respectful greeting to Alearda, the greeting of brotherhood to Arnald, and then, with laughing lips, he began to recite the romance that follows:

"Through the burning wastes of Afric
Where the bright-eyed serpents breed,
In the evening's shade I wander'd,
Weary, on my weary steed;
When the anguish'd cry of fear
Thrill'd upon my startled ear.

"'Midst the waves of sand, an islet
With its foliage woo'd the breeze,
Whence a maiden rush'd in terror
From the shadow of its trees,
While a serpent, ring'd with light,
Follow'd faster than her flight.

"With my lifted spear, and waking
All my horse's slumb'ring fire
Soon I stood between the virgin
And the sparkling serpent's ire;

Soon he fell before my hand,
Bruis'd and lifeless on the sand.

" Pale with terror gaz'd the maiden
Stiffen'd as that serpent brood;
And it was—it was Soleyma!
Who in wild advent'rous mood
Wander'd o'er the desert plain,
Circled by a scanty train.

" Yet amongst those gallant heroes
Was not one so bold of heart,
That he dar'd to meet the monster
On his perill'd lady's part,
Who in very courtlike guise
Left them for the fairer prize.

" Mindful of my holy patron,
Then I thought to free the fair
From the darker, fiercer serpent
That within us finds its lair.
Soon the holy strife is done
Loves and trusts the fairest one."

As at first all had laughed with the laughing knight, so now all with him raised their tearful eyes in joyful ecstacy to heaven. There was a solemn silence through the whole assembly;—Alearda beamed like an angel of God in prayer.

At length George continued in a

subdued voice; "Yes, now loves and trusts Soleyma, and has landed upon this coast with many noble dames and knights of our people, to request the holy baptism from the hands of the pious Altarbol. When the great work is done, the exalted Prior will perhaps, in love and honour unite me to Soleyma, for we are betrothed already."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Oh! thou beautiful meadow, consecrated and glorified by the image of the Virgin, how didst thou glitter in emulation of the sunny flood on that bright autumnal morning, which ushered in the baptism of all the noble dames and heroes of the Moorish country!

Zealous and mild, a genuine follower of the Apostle, walked Altarbol with the holy water through the ranks of eager convertites. As the fair, brilliant figures bent before the venerable old man in his simple priestly garments, and thronged about him in earnest prayer,—ah! then was visible to the dullest understanding that power of the eternal over the earthly, which is too oft forgotten by us.

Soleyma, at the baptism, received the name of Charlotte, for Alearda declared, it was fitting that this fair royalty should be called after the great Emperor, Charles, the miraculous hero of antiquity, and then it seemed as if she could not have had another name.

Altarbol blessed the blooming bride and placed her in the arms of the heroic bridegroom; and now began the feast on the plain, beneath the shadow of the chesnut and the olive-trees.

Amongst the pleasant speeches and replies that travelled cheerfully and without constraint through the noble circle, it was now mentioned that the greater part of these Moorish knights had before resolved to make an attack upon Provence. This moreover was to have been for the sake of Soleyma, whose present conversion alone was the anchor which had stemmed the stormy undertaking.

Arnald thought on the earlier warnings of George, at the time that he was called Gryba; in the same moment Altarbol beckoned the Minstrel aside, and they walked up and down together beneath the shade of the nearest trees.

"Arnald!"—said the venerable Prior in deep emotion,—"My dear Arnald! How the glory of chaste woman is again manifested! The Countess was robbed of that star-ornament, and she was silent in her mildness, but a single murmur, which at last escaped her pious lips, falls into the ear of a minstrel, who immediately travels to the land of the Heathens and fetches back the spoil. But at the same time he conquers still more—the two noblest knights that Christendom has ever won from the erring paths of Mahomet; What has not Sebastian accomplished since with the sword and with the pencil!—And what has not George, the

visible image of his patron! Provence is saved, and with it the whole Frankish land; in the converted Charlotte too arises a new star, which will light the blessed flames of art and heroism in many a soul. I know not, son, whether it is quite clear to you how painters of a godly call represent their angels: these lovely images perform in still cheerfulness the commands of heaven, as an infant game, but at the same time as one of earnest import. One often sees intelligent children thus playing—without noise, without laughter, but with a smile, which visibly spreads over the youthful soul, while they are wrapt up in their visions, wherein they are now knights, now monks—and the maidens, now nuns, now empresses. The boys seldom, indeed, preserve that purity in the intercourse of the world, perhaps cannot in our fallen state,—but the women,—they are able—and

they become messengers of the Lord in the sense that the angels are so. Look at Alearda; she knows not what she has accomplished; suspects not her future deeds, and yet her whole life is such a mission,—so heavenly, so fruitful of the bloom of Paradise."

At this moment Alearda looked round to both with a gentle smile, and something thrilled through Arnald's breast like the greeting of the near and blest eternity.

CHAPTER XXV.

THIS feeling seemed to be meant as Arnald had understood it. The spirit of life ebbed more and more from soul and body, and the love of life slowly followed its companion. At this time he was often wont to visit the hill of lindens, which he had long ago chosen for his grave, and once, in the late glimmer of evening, composed this song;

"Oh thou, my final place of rest!
With parting glance the orb of day
Looks on thee from the amber west,
While breezes with thy lindens play:
But soon a hillock shall be seen
Where now thy grass is waving green,
And long ere frost is on the spray:
But 'neath thy turf is still repose
In summer's heat, or winter's snows.

" When silent night is o'er the skies,
  And stars are trembling on the wave,
Will not my spirit's hymn arise
  About my green and lonely grave?
Be that as Heaven may will it done,
Yet still about my mossy stone
  Shall many a war-strain of the brave,
And many a song from many a fair
Rise gently on the gentle air.

" Are these my songs that now you breathe
  To sweetest winds with voice more sweet?
Or do you from my flowers wreathe
  A fresher strain the dead to greet?
In war's dark storm and blust'ring night
I steered my vessel by your light,—
  And now I rest beneath your feet,
Will you not chaunt the hymn of sleep
Above my head when night-dews weep?"

He had breathed these words distinctly though in a voice of deep emotion, and hence was heard by Sebastian, who had climbed the hill behind him, unperceived, and now joined him with a cheerful smile, saying;

" No, indeed; with God's will, the hymn of sleep shall not be wanting to

you from the mouths of chaste women. Look! the grass in the middle of the mount has shot up stronger and higher than in the other parts. The spot delights in you, as you in it; but yet the end is not so near as you seem to think. Let us still look out cheerfully into cheerful life: If you do not object to it, George and I will breakfast with you to-morrow."

Arnald nodded his head in friendly assent, and returned home in a more joyful mood.

In this night he dreamt much of the old Walter, and, when the next day his friends visited him, he could not cease speaking of the departed hero,—of his gentleness,—of his piety,—of the iron strength of his mind, which lay concealed, as if under pleasant flowers, till the voice of duty or honour called forth the kindred sparks from their deep but noble resting-place;—"Yet I think,"—he concluded,—"that the hero

would rather have seen me rise immediately from a glorious field of battle. He himself, indeed, died a still death in soft, gentle extinction—and perhaps after all such wishes may seem mere childish vanity to the blessed spirits that stand before the throne of God. The messenger, whom the Lord sends to his faithful, is still an angel, whether his garment be woven from the glance of arms and the lightning-flash, or from the cool wind of evening and the native fragrance of the meadows."

During this Altarbol joined them, and the discourse more and more dwelt upon the point of separation from this earthly life.

"I believe,"—said George,—"none pass into sleep so softly and gently as the poet."

"Amen!" said Arnald in a subdued tone, and folded his hands, while his friend, without observing it, continued thus with increasing animation;

"The poet's life — as far as I can see, who myself am none,—the poet's life has long before freed itself from the fetters of the body, winged with native aspiration, and volatilized in its exalted moments into pure sun-light and rainbow brightness, so that without any effort he flings off the stark covering of earth, and floats up into the kingdom, which belongs to him from the right imparted to his soul by Heaven."

Arnald shook his head in smiling denial.

"If your wise people are right, who call the poet merely an inventor of pleasant tales, with which reality has seldom any thing to do, then you yourself have become one in this moment. It is not so sweet and soft as you imagine. The old mother, commonly by us called nature, grasps after the poet with a thousand arms; as she loves him dearly, so he in return loves her with equal warmth, and when he seriously thinks of the parting from her, he

is weak and melancholy, and she not less so. Though in the other world she may bloom more beautifully and unchangeably, he is yet rooted to this—to this earth, as it is with every flower. Oft indeed, he acts as fractious children do—when a mother denies their longings,—and obstinately declares, 'I would rather leave the house entirely.' I have heard many songs to this purport and have myself sung a thousand of them. But only let the mother seriously turn away and exclaim,—'Go; I will no more of you,'—and the obstinate heart melts—and, however boldly we may bear up, she has only to take us in her arms again and we nestle, weeping, to her breast, now doubly dear, while the reconciliation but unites the bonds on either side more indissolubly. But the voice of the Lord,—praised be his name for it to eternity,—the voice of the Lord awakes in us, and with songs we ride out to many a glorious field; —with songs we pass into eternity;—or at last by our own hearth we feel that our

daily work is done, and lay us down to sleep with smiles; yet even then it remains the same;—'With songs we pass into eternity.' The swan may have contended with many a bitter pang before he sings his chaunt of death, but with the first sound of his hymn all pain has ceased, and when we have got so far!—oh, then all is again as sweet and gentle as you suppose it."

They looked at him in deep emotion; he, however, again turned to mirth, affirming that he had done after the manner of many wise speakers and unexpectedly in the end contradicted the beginning of his speech.

George in his increasing spirits brought forth a flask of sherry, and, as he poured out for his friend, for the first time perceived that Arnald during the repast had not touched a drop of wine.

"No, indeed, I have not,"—replied Arnald,—"And you know how much I generally enjoy this precious gift of Heaven.

But do not for that suppose me ill. . On the contrary I felt myself particularly well; I needed no excitement and thus had utterly forgotten that there was any wine-juice in the world; but now, George that you remind me of it so kindly, you shall give me of your beautiful wine of Xeres."

He, however, scarcely drank of the pearly goblet, when he again sprung up cheerily, hung the lyre upon his shoulders, and begged his friends to go with him to Castle Maraviglia. Sebastian wished to lead him, but he refused his aid, and hastened like a stag to the ruins, talking, as he went, of the happiness they would have together on the morrow at Castle Bisiers.

"Prepare yourselves;"—said Altarbol to George and Sebastian.—"Our friend will indeed be happy to-morrow, but not at Castle Bisiers."

CHAPTER XXVI.

ARNALD had caught a few of the Prior's words without however perceiving their purport. But when, having ascended the highest ruins of Castle Maraviglia, he sate down on the mossy stones in the shade of the chief tower, and the forgotten weakness again thrilled through his limbs, and his breast trembled with sharper spasms than he had ever before experienced,—when the three friends stood about him in tears!—oh, then the deep and awful meaning of this hour was manifested to him. In silence he raised his head to Heaven, then again looked down upon the beautiful country, from which the evening mist of autumn rose on all sides towards the height like a solemn shroud.—"Lovely! Lovely earth!" he sighed in tones scarce audible—and his eyes too were moist with tears. For a long time he remained si-

lent, when a noble oak poured down upon him a shower of red and yellow leaves, so that he lay as if wholly covered with the mourning gold. More and more loving was his smile!—He raised himself up in his last strength, tuned his lyre, and breathed this song—the death-song of the swan:

"As flows the stream with murmuring call
When close upon its rocky fall,
So creeps my soul with weary power
On the last step of its last hour,
Well!—Thou who from the seeds of birth
Didst call me to this life of earth,
Thou spirit of eternal love,
Now call me into life above.

"Many thy gifts,—a minstrel's fire,
For war a sword, for love a lyre,
To triumph in the battle hour,
To sing of love in beauty's bow'r.
Thou gav'st me pain with deep delight,
A glorious morn with shades of night;
And now a fresh and laurell'd grave
Within the land I help'd to save.

"Through the cold darkness of the tomb
The lights of Heaven freshly bloom.
Oh! let me with my latest voice
In Heaven's boundless love rejoice!
And thou, Oh, Earth! when all is done,
Lie lightly on thy Minstrel son."

With the dying chords of the lyre a dying echo sighed through the ruins of the building, and Sebastian afterwards declared that in the very same moment he saw a figure like the Minstrel-King emerge in shroud from the meadow-mist and melt away into the gold-edged clouds of evening. Deep in the bosom of the three friends lay the earnest feeling;

NOW DIES THE NOBLEST MALE-BRANCH OF THE RACE OF MARAVIGLIA.

It was the last moment—the sun had already set—Arnald again raised himself up, and murmured;

"If she had called me but once before my end—but once,—her knight and minstrel!"

"She did call you such, only yester-evening, before the Viscount and myself," replied Altarbol.

And Arnald raised his hands to Heaven in transport, exclaiming;

"Never again shall I see Alearda with these mortal eyes—but oh! this crown

is brilliant beyond the merits of my earthly life!"

The clouds veiled the firmament, and the constellation of Alearda looked down upon the dying Minstrel.

He gazed on them awhile in perfect consciousness—smiled—and amidst the prayers of Altarbol,—died.

Scatter'd his loveliest rhymes
In the rude whirlwind of the times,—
Never to return,—ah never!
The leaf, that falls in Autumn, falls for ever.
But that he nobly serv'd the noblest dame,
That springs in legend from his tomb,
And aye the tale through time shall bloom.
Oh! read this story of his fame
With heart of love—that burns with holy flame,—
Holy as his who sleeps the dreamless rest;
Then sigh from quiet breast,—
"Sleep, calmly, Minstrel, in the grave,
Within the land you helped to save,
And thou, O, Earth! now all is done,
Lie lightly on thy Minstrel son."

END.

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